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SOCIAL CONFLICT AND THE MAKING OF A GLOBALIZED PLACE AT ROŞIA MONTANĂ

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by

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Cover design: Andrei Ciubotaru

This book is dedicated to:

My late mother and geophysicist Rodica Maria Carmen (1942-2015) and to my father and geophysicist Marcel Armand

and to the people of Roșia Montană who have shared insightful bits of their lives with me beginning with 2005.

About the Author

Filip Alexandrescu has completed his undergraduate studies in sociology in his home country at the University of Bucharest, Romania. He has then pursued his graduate education in Canada, where he has earned his master's degree at Western University (2002) and his PhD in Sociology at the University of Toronto (2011). The research findings reported in this book have been collected over three months of fieldwork during his doctoral research (2005-2008). The fieldwork has been supported via several research and travel grants[1], awarded following international competitions. Following the field stage of his research, the findings have been analysed and interpreted over the following years, a process which has resulted in a number of publications and conference presentations on this topic.

During these academic events and over the years in which he has carried out the research, the author has led conversations with well-known scholars in the fields of historical pathways and transformations, such as Bernd Baldus (his thesis supervisor), environmental sociology (John Hannigan) and cultural geography (Ken MacDonald). He also cooperated closely with Michael Cernea, well-known for his research on displacement and resettlement impacts as well as with Anthony Oliver-Smith and Julie Maldonado.

Filip lives in Bucharest and has recently completed a project funded by the Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding on the climate-related extreme events exposure of Roma communities in Romania. He continues his sociological research as senior researcher at the Research Institute for Quality of Life, Romanian Academy, dealing with the formation and deepening of social and environmental inequalities.

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[1] These include the School of Graduate Studies Research Travel Grant, University of Toronto, Canada (2006), the Sir Val Duncan Travel Grant, University of Toronto (2007) and the Scholarship Exchange Program with CEE countries of the German Federal Foundation for the Environment (2007 – 2008).

CONTENT

List of abbreviations

AAC   Autonomous Administration for Copper

AM   Alburnus Maior (NGO from Roșia Montană)

DFDR   Development - forced displacement and resettlement

EIA   Environmental Impact Assessment

EU   European Union

EVZ   Evenimentul Zilei (newspaper)

FoE   Friends of the Earth

GR   Gabriel Resources

GR PR   Gabriel Resources Press Release

ICSID   International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes

IFC   International Finance Corporation

IRR   Impoverishment Risks and Reconstruction

NGO   Non-governmental organization

RMGC   Roșia Montană Gold Corporation

RRAP   Resettlement and relocation action plans

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Chapter One   Introduction

Roșia Montană has become a cause célèbre in the landscape of social and environmental conflicts in Romania and Central and Eastern Europe. The two decade-old conflict over the Romanian town that sits on top Europe's largest gold deposit has pitted pro-mining interests against those trying to preserve Roșia Montană. At the same time, the conflict has been an academic bonanza, particularly for young and aspiring researchers in the social sciences. The reason is that through its manifold implications, the place and the conflict surrounding it have drawn the attention of historians, geographers, sociologists, anthropologists, economists, political scientists, communication and legal scholars as well as of geologists, environmental scientists and engineers. For social scientists, in particular, the very unfolding of the conflict since the dawn of the new millennium has been a source of constant interest. The conflict has not been identical with itself at all times, therefore there is a need to distinguish between its different phases. The present book focuses on the initial phase, the one in which Roșia Montană has become a globalized place.

From a theoretical point of view, this book aims to contribute to a non-essentialist understanding of place under conflict, by paying close attention to the transformations unfolding at the point where the 'space of flows' erupts into and threatens to disrupt the 'space of places' (Castells 2000). The objective is to use insights from geography (through the notions of space and place) and anthropology - in particular Clifford Geertz's (1979) notion of experience near/ experience distant - to understand how a place is profoundly transformed under

conditions of a protracted political ecological conflict. This approach aims to contribute to further Doreen Massey's critique of the 'the billiard-ball view of place'. From such a perspective, places and their communities are endowed with certain essential characteristics that seem be thoroughly tied to a given *locale*. When such a place becomes embroiled in a conflict, this view assumes that the reactions will be shaped by the essential features of that place and thus tend either towards resistance or victimization (e.g. Pedersen 2014, Lassila 2018). An alternative viewpoint has begun to emerge, however, which acknowledges that conflicts transform places in more complex ways than the resistance/victimization perspective allows for (Conde 2017). This book takes this argument further by showing how globalization selectively activates and re-signifies local relationships (e.g. Hovardas 2017). As a result of the conflict, the place and its inhabitants become re-connected with a variety of actors at various scales and are visibly transformed in the process. This happens both as a result of shifts in the global economy leading to fragmenting development (Scholz 2004) and the growth of transnational movements (Scheidel et al. 2018). Roșia Montană is considered here as a good example of a globalized place, dependent on decisions and strategies enacted out of global metropolises (Leibert 2013). But "globalized" does not mean hopelessly lost in the face of overpowering global influences. Globalized places are, I argue in this book, re-signified as political symbols by transnational environmental justice movements that oppose extractive projects.

To capture the making of a globalized place, I focus on Roșia Montană within a defined time period, between the years 2000 and 2010. This corresponds to a timeframe when the conflict over the mining project proposed by the Roșia Montană Gold Corporation (RMGC) unfolded in and around the historic village of Roșia Montană. The 'social conflict over place' – which is the *leitmotif* of this book – involves several interrelated processes that

occurred in connection with Roșia Montană but extended far beyond the geographic boundaries of this village.

First, RMGC began in 2002 the acquisition of properties to prepare space for its large-scale mining project. This led to a variety of strategies of the project developers to get the local property owners to sell their properties in the absence of any formal expropriation rights, as is common in the developing world (e.g. Tagliarino 2018). This generated an equally diverse panoply of responses from diverse property owners in the project impact area and from their variable allies.

Second, the conflict has been one over the meaning of place for most of the period surveyed here because it has involved different features of Roșia Montană as place. The landscape of Roșia Montană, its mining past, the ways of life of the inhabitants have been taken up and mobilized by all those supporting or opposing the RMGC project. The big debates that have characterized this period have been whether the environment in Roșia Montană is largely pristine or historically polluted, whether the Roman galleries and other historical features of the landscape should be preserved in whole or only in part, whether the inhabitants lead a satisfying life or should be helped to develop etc. All these local features have been selectively chosen for attention and distanced or neared, as through a magnifying glass, by those engaged in the conflict.

The third and most important feature of the 2000 – 2010 timespan has been that the fate of the project – its commencement or cancellation – has been shaped to a significant extent by the actions of actors working with or through place features. Actors have positioned themselves around particular place elements – surface rights, houses and homes, iconic pictures or local memories – to challenge the project or take advantage of it. As a result, the struggle over place has been over each house, piece of land or person that could be made to resist or, on the contrary, to side with the project developers. This has led to a variety of shifting

alliances of actors that have swayed the prospects of developing a new mine at Roșia Montană in different directions, but without a clear resolution (e.g. Alexandrescu 2012, Alexandrescu and Baldus, 2017).

After 2010, the struggle over Roșia Montană has entered a new phase in which powerful and distant actors have taken up the main decision-making roles. Two instances are worth mentioning to illustrate the idea that the struggle over Roșia Montană has been almost entirely extricated from the local context and made to depend on abstract legal and financial considerations. The first example is the so-called "Law for Roșia Montană" (Goțiu 2013) which aimed to circumvent all legal obstacles that the project had faced since the early 2000s, and included the right to expropriate Roșia Montană inhabitants on behalf of the mining company. This would have rendered futile any form of local opposition or negotiation as the force of the state would have been brought to bear on the lives of Roșia Montană residents. The proposed law was, however, abandoned due to massive protests in several major cities and Bucharest in the fall of 2013.

The second instance occurred in 2015 when RMGC sued the Romanian state before the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) of the World Bank, claiming damages in the amount of 4.4 billion USD (Reguly 2018). The case makes now its way through the inscrutable decision-making mechanisms of the ICSID. The expectation is that if the mining company wins this legal case, the Romanian state will be forced to pay 4.4 billion USD. Will it agree to the payment while preserving Roșia Montană or will it attempt to cover part of these expenses by allowing the exploitation of gold? While the Romanian state and the public await the verdict, it is useful to go back and understand what the conflict has involved over the years and how Roșia Montană has been transformed by it.

This is certainly neither the first nor the last social scientific analysis of the case. The social science literature on Roșia Montană is rich and varied and it is instructive to classify it. One can distinguish more or less critical interpretations of the conflict. There are contributions rooted in specific theories or rather descriptive accounts of the conflict and Roșia Montană. Some analyses are grounded in field research while others are based on secondary sources. Here I propose a combination of these criteria in order to situate the present book in this rich field of research.

To further refine the classification above, it can be said that the conflict over Roșia Montană has evolved over three stages: a local and regional stage (between 2000 and 2009), a national stage (2010 until 2014) and a transnational stage (beginning in 2015). The stages are far from being neatly separated as there are overlaps between them. For example, the local phase of the conflict had elements of the transnational stage. The literature addressing this case reflects in part this trajectory, but is also subject to the specific research interests of the scholars engaged (see Table 1.1).

In the first stage, the Roșia Montană place and community were seen to play an essential role in the conflict, whether through the landscape, the history of the place, the options of the locals or their responses to the proposed project. The earliest contributions focussed on the historical heritage of Roșia Montană, especially its Roman and medieval mining galleries, and the attempts to safeguard it in the face of the proposed mine (Slotta 2004, personal communication). They included three volumes from the series entitled *Silver and Salt in Transylvania* (Slotta et al. 2001, 2002a, 2002c), published by the German Mining Museum in Bochum. Each volume included archival material on the Roșia Montană mining town and its historical gold mines, including travellers' accounts from the 18th and 19th centuries.

Another focal point of the literature has been the resettlement of the population from Roșia Montană and its social and economic repercussions. The framework of choice has been Michael Cernea's impoverishment risks and reconstruction model (IRR) (Cernea 1997, 2008) or some adaptation of it. However, over the years it has become clear that the Roșia Montană resettlement did not follow the expected impoverishment trajectory but revealed important deviations, both negative (the economic distress caused by the closure of the mines) and positive (through the agency of movements and individual residents) (Alexandrescu 2011, 2013). The post-resettlement period has proved to be equally complex for the former Roșia Montană residents (Buzoianu & Țoc 2013).

The trajectory of the Roșia Montană conflict has also served as empirical background for more ambitious theoretical arguments, building on the careful observation of turning points, surprises and emergent interpretations related to the resistance against the mining project (Alexandrescu 2012). Some authors have demonstrated ingenuity by using the Roșia Montană case to flesh out interpretations rooted in arguments of political ecology, post-socialist anthropologies or de-growth/environmental justice vocabularies. Szombati (2006, 2007) has been an early and insightful contributor to this rich theoretical interpretation, weaving together theoretical insights from Foucault, Latour and Gramsci (2007). The theoretically sophisticated research was continued by the numerous explorations of Velicu (between 2012 and 2019). All these contributions have set the case against a rich theoretical background with the aim to make it illustrative for deeper theoretical explorations.

The social movements that have mobilized around Roșia Montană have also drawn the attention of social scientists, capturing different phases of the conflict (e.g. Ban and Romanțan 2007 and Anghel 2013). The polemical representations related to the conflict have also received attention (Pop 2008), including the book-long treatment by Pop (2014).

Table 1. 1: **The stages of the Roșia Montană conflict and its attendant scholarship**

Stage of the Roșia Montană conflict	Focal points of the analysis	Representative works
The local and regional stage	Roșia Montană as historical mining place & early UNESCO proposal	Slotta et al. (2001, 2002a, 2002c)
	Resettlement of the project-affected population	Alexandrescu (2011, 2013), Balica and Velicu (2005), Buzoianu & Țoc (2013)
	Evolution of the conflict punctuated by contingencies, surprises & shifting definitions of justice	Alexandrescu (2012, 2017), Velicu (2012a & 2012b) Velicu & Kaika (2017)
	Anthropology of subjectivity under post-socialism & the new capitalism, moral economies	Szombati (2006, 2007), Velicu (2012b, 2014, 2015, 2019)
	Social movements around RM (including support vs. opposition)	Anghel (2013), Ban and Romanțan (2007), Buțiu & Pascaru (2009), Samuelson (2012).
	Social representations of the conflict	Pop (2008, 2014)
	Globalization & developmentalism and their local effects on the RM community	Chiper (2012), Kalb (2006), Pascaru (2007), Ispas-Pascaru & Pascaru (2010), Pascaru (2013a & 2013b), Pascaru & Plesa (2015), Szombati (2007), Waack (2009)
	Corporate social responsibility applied to RMGC	Burja & Mihalache (2010)
	Alternative development paths for Roșia Montană	Vesalon and Crețan (2013), Mihai et al. (2015), Ștefănescu & Alexandrescu (2019).
	"The Romanian Autumn" as a generalized response to the RM conflict	Goțiu (2013), Katarzyna Jarosz (2015), Margarit (2016), Soare & Tufiș (2020)

Stage of the Roșia Montană conflict	Focal points of the analysis	Representative works
The national stage	National framing of the conflict over Roșia Montană	Fairclough and Mădroane (2015), Heemeryck (2018), Samuelson (2012), Ștefănescu-Sebastian (2014)
	Digital networks and involvement in protest	Mercea (2014)
	Europeanization	Ban and Romanțan (2008), Kühnle (2008)
The transnational stage	Transnational protests	Bejan et al. (2015), Branea (2015), Margarit (2017)
	Roșia Montană as UNESCO heritage site	Dawson (2017)

Source: author's literature review

Some of the most numerous contributions on Roșia Montană have explored the impacts of globalization on this place, both materially (e.g. Pascaru 2013a) and discursively (e.g. Chiper 2012). These works have addressed the various processes of globalization shaping the transformation of Roșia Montană, including the political economy of mining (e.g. Waack 2009), the involvement of the World Bank (Kalb 2006) or the affective politics of corporate hegemony (Szombati 2007).

More focussed studies have applied management-based concepts, such as corporate social responsibility (Burja & Mihalache 2010). Further research has explored different alternatives to the proposed mining project at Roșia Montană, thus broadening the perspective beyond mono-industrial development (e.g. Vesalon and Crețan 2013, Ștefănescu and Alexandrescu 2019).

A smaller number of studies have framed the Roșia Montană case in terms of its national or international significance. Fairclough and Mădroane (2015) used framing theory based on argumentation in order to enable decisions and actions on Roșia

Montană, based on the national-level relevance of the case. In the second and third stages, the local level played a less important role, the disagreements concentrating on what RM means for Romania, for Europe or the world and what the consequences of this project would be at these larger, supra-local scales.

This book deals with the initial stage of the struggle, when most controversies focussed on the place – its nature, its features, its trajectory etc. – rather than on what the RMGC project meant for post-socialist politics. This was the time when the struggle over place was at its most intense. The discussion below brings to life the voices or circumstances of 66 respondents that I met and interviewed in Roșia Montană and its environs between 2005 and 2008.

The struggle over place means that the weight of the conflict centered on Roșia Montană and its immediate environs. Starting in 2009 and unfolding over the following years, the stakes of the conflict have evolved increasingly at the national and international levels. The interpretation offered here was guided by an effort to distance the analysis from the immediately visible features of the conflict, while seeking to place the explanation at a higher level of abstraction, namely how environmental justice is shaped in the transformation of place. Environmental justice is used here in the broad sense advocated by Schlosberg (2009, 7), namely as a discourse that encompasses in broad terms issues of "distribution, recognition, capabilities, and procedural justice" in relation to environmental and ecological concerns.

The present book is the result of a profound paradox. The ability to explore the making of a globalized place is the direct consequence of the efficacy of environmental justice movements to delay the large-scale project proposed for Roșia Montană. One such movement is the Save Roșia Montană campaign, initially led by local activists (Eugen David, Zeno Cornea, Sorin Jurca and several others) and transnational activists (Stephanie Roth, Francoise Heidebroek, Sorana Olaru and others). On the one

hand, thanks to their struggle, much of Roșia Montană remained unaffected by the proposed mine (save for some exploratory work), thus allowing sufficient time to observe changes and ponder their meanings, as is done in this book. On the other hand, the success of the opposition has been achieved to the extent to which the activists have managed to link Roșia Montană to broader issues, such as Europeanization, the rule of law, peasant resistance etc. The polarization created by the conflict has stimulated a process of de-localization. This means that the uniqueness and complexity of the place, especially the ambivalence of its residents with regard to the Roșia Montană project, have been lost from view. The "saviours" of Roșia Montană have reified and thus distorted the many meanings of the place they wanted to protect. Had they not transformed Roșia Montană into a globally recognizable icon, however, much of the place might have been lost under the cold blades of the mine's excavators.

The Guiding Questions of the Book

In this book, the concept of place will be employed as a sensitizing device and set in contrast to community, through a discussion of the sociological literature on the *local* and of the geographical writings concerned with the "defence of place". The analysis is based on the distinction between place as a political economic reality and place as a phenomenon of experience. The book assumes, first of all, that the dynamic concept of place proposed in chapter three emerges under specific socio-historical circumstances. This specific political economy of place is outlined in chapter five, as a theoretical background for the book. The analytical focus of the volume, to be found in chapters six and seven, is the transformation of the experience of place through experience-nearing and experience-distancing (following Geertz' 1979 distinction). The guiding questions of the book are as

follows: First, how is the experience of place recreated through distancing, resulting in a set of co-existing iconic experiences of place? Second, how are these iconic experiences continuously transformed through processes of experience-nearing and how do various actors become involved in these transformations in the experience of place?

Roşia Montană Vignette

Introducing the empirical material which is the basis for the present book is both straightforward and challenging. It is straightforward because the case involves a conflict over a proposed large-scale mine that was to be developed in a historical mining town called Roşia Montană, which is a clearly identifiable place and community in Western Romania. On the other hand, the description of the case is challenging because the question immediately arises over the partiality of the description offered. What details are included and, more importantly, which are left out in presenting the case? Which aspects are brought into the spotlight and which are left in the shadow? What sort of speculation about the future of the conflict is offered, even if it is implicit? Every human community has, and in fact exists, through a variety of stories (Maines and Bridger 1992). In presenting the "case", the researcher is forced to choose and often also concoct one of the varieties of possible stories. This is even more problematic in conflict situations when storytelling activities tend to become intensified and in which the actors themselves claim that theirs is the "true story"[2]. More often than not, these different stories are in competition with one another. Each detail or particular turn of phrase with regard to the place

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[2] Interestingly, between 2006 and 2010, one party in the conflict (the Roşia Montană Gold Corporation) made its online presence known through the website: www.truestory.ro.

under discussion, however "factual" by some accounts can be taken to represent fiction or misrepresentation by those holding opposing views. But dealing with these many partial stories, which proliferate and are muted, which empower some but may disempower others, which are constantly reproduced or shifted, represents the intellectual focus of this book. Creating and transforming stories of a heterogeneous reality is taken here as an inexhaustible expression of a changing sense of place. Human agency and its diverse manifestations appear to be especially worthy of exploration in situations that seem pre-structured by the "omniscient reality of state and capital" (Howlett 2010: 101). With the caveat of inescapable partiality in mind, I shall describe in broad outlines what the "Roşia Montană case" was about between 2000 and 2010.

Roşia Montană is a commune with a semi-urban character (Pop 2002), located in the Apuseni Mountains of Romania, also known as the Western Carpathians (see Figure 1.1). From a geological point of view, it is part of the Golden Quadrilateral containing gold-bearing rocks and stretching between the historical mining towns Săcărâmb, Brad, Abrud, Baia de Arieş and Zlatna. It is about 70 km away from Alba Iulia, the capital of Alba county to which Roşia Montană belongs, and about 130 km from Cluj Napoca, the largest city in Transylvania. Until 2006, it could pride itself with having an almost uninterrupted history of gold mining since at least the second century AD (Dordea 2003: 275). The year AD 105 – 106 witnessed the Roman conquest of the territory known as "Dacia" roughly corresponding to present-day Romania, after the two wars between the legions of the Roman emperor Trajan and the army of the Dacian king Decebalus. The Roman conquest was driven, in part, by the fabled gold riches of the Dacian kings (Roman et al. 1982). The first written document in which Roşia Montană is mentioned by its ancient name – "Alburnus Maior" – is dated February 6, 131 AD, and it contains a mining contract. Mining activities were continued – with the usual ebbs and flows of gold mines – over the course of the centuries,

under different regimes of extraction, using various technologies and with different social and environmental consequences. Mining came to a grinding halt in 2006 when the state-owned company RoşiaMin, a subsidiary of Minvest Deva, ceased all operations, both underground and opencast, in Roşia Montană. This would have been a rather unremarkable event, mirrored in countless other mining towns in Romania during the 1990s and early 2000s, had it not been for a special circumstance which singled out the name "Roşia Montană" in Romanian and international public opinion. The circumstance that made Roşia Montană visible for wider audiences was the discovery by Canadian gold mining junior Gabriel Resources (GR)[3] of a major gold deposit (Ganzelewski 2002): the largest reserve known now in Europe. This discovery[4], which was the result of several years of exploratory work (carried out between 1997 and 2006), set in motion several processes which have changed Roşia Montană in significant ways.

Taken together, the processes to be outlined below provide a dynamic overview of the Roşia Montană case. At the same time, it should be noted that these transformations were neither complete, as some of them were unfolding throughout the 2000s, nor coherent, as some worked in favour and other against the proposed mining project. These circumstances made them even less predictable in their future unfolding. All in all, the processes described represent only a partial representation of a complex reality.

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[3] In 1997, Gabriel Resources established a joint venture with the Romanian state enterprise RAC Deva under the name Euro Gold Resources. RAC Deva was renamed in the following two years Minvest Deva and in early 2000, Euro Gold Resources was renamed Roşia Montană Gold Corporation (RMGC). (Ziua 1998 and GR press releases). In what follows I will refer to GR rather than RMGC as the more visible and powerful actor behind the joint venture.

[4] The term "discovery" is itself contentious given that Romanian mining engineers counter that a significant deposit (30.977 tones), albeit only about one tenth of what GR estimated (314.145 tones), had already been identified at Roşia Montană before 1990 (Sîntimbrean et al. 2006).
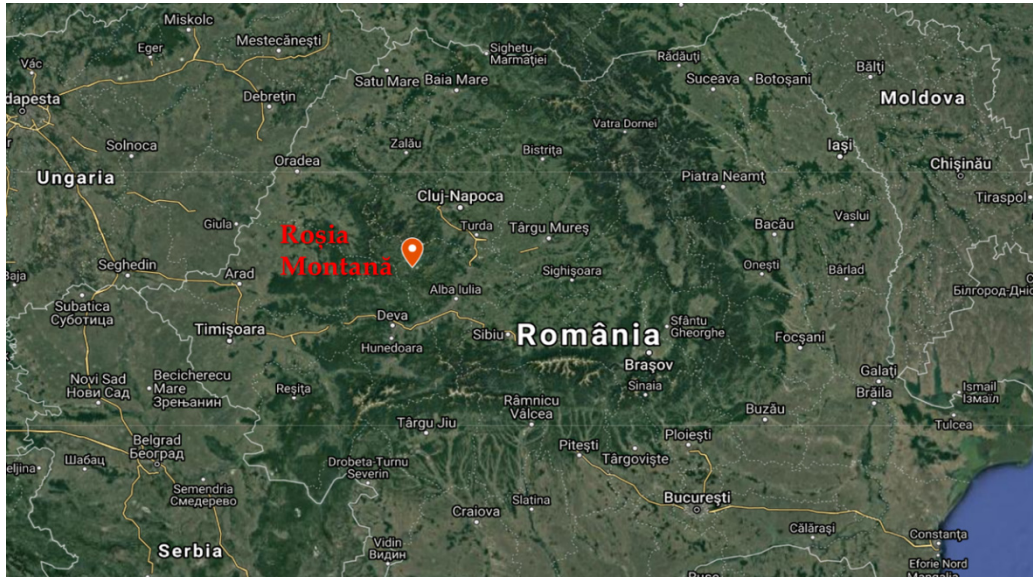
Figure 1. 1 **Roșia Montană and its location in the Western Carpathians, Romania**

Source: Google maps (2020)

First, the plans of Gabriel Resources to develop the gold deposit at Roșia Montană met with substantial opposition from several hundred resident families (who identified themselves as "property owners") who founded an association with the name "Alburnus Maior" (2000). At roughly the same time, several Romanian archaeologists called for the mine and town to be declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO, after German and French archaeologists unearthed 20 altars dedicated to Roman gods (Damsell, *National Post* 2000: C2). In 2002, the Roșia Montană-based opposition was joined by international environmental movement organizations (Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth) and a few international activists moved to Roșia Montană to help the resident organization achieve greater visibility and effectiveness in its opposition to the plans of GR. The highpoint of the movement opposing the proposed Roșia Montană mine, judged by its international visibility, was reached in 2005 when a Swiss-born Alburnus Maior activist (Stephanie Roth) received the Goldman environmental prize for grassroots

environmentalism in Europe. The movement achieved its greatest effectiveness, however, in 2007 when legal challenges by Alburnus Maior and allied organizations put the environmental impact assessment (EIA) process for the GR mine on hold for three years (2007 – 2010). However, the struggle was far from over as the legal challenges by Alburnus Maior continued and, at the same time, the company used all institutional and legal means to push its project through. The latest stage of the legal battles has commenced in 2015, once the case has been brought before the ICSID. All these legal and administrative entanglements in which the project and its different stakeholders were and still are caught make the ultimate fate of the project and its trajectory over the coming years unpredictable. For all their uncertainty, the legal struggles around the project provide the master frame for the other processes described below.

A second process was set in motion by GR in 2002, when it began its so-called property acquisition program. As a result, a growing number of people began leaving Roşia Montană, partly enticed by the compensations offered by Gabriel Resources for their properties, in part for fear of being expropriated by the project developers, or for various personal, family or cultural reasons. Especially during the first two years of property acquisitions (2002 – 2004), the mining company used different pressure tactics to compel Roşia Montană residents to sell their properties (for example, the local doctor was apparently bribed by the company to leave Roşia Montană in 2003 – Popescu 2003a). At the end of 2007, approximately three quarters of residents had sold their properties but in the following years no more acquisitions took place. The smaller number of Alburnus Maior members still residing in Roşia Montană at the time of my fieldwork (2005-2008) claimed that they were determined to resist any offers and pressures that the company might mount against them. Other residents had no such determined attitudes against the compensations offer by GR. Still they held back over the years from selling their properties to GR.

The mining company also promised the construction of two resettlement sites, one at Dealul Furcilor/Recea next to the regional capital Alba Iulia and the other dubbed the "New Roșia Montană" (or Piatra Albă) on the northern slope of the Roșia Valley. In 2009, it had completed the Recea resettlement site, which was inhabited shortly afterwards (Buzioanu and Țoc 2013). The second resettlement site (Recea), for which several tens of residents had opted, was never completed (as of 2020).

Between 2000 and 2010, the company had now no means to get the state to expropriate these residents so any single landowner could, in principle at least, block the advancement of the project in its proposed form. A new legislative proposal to change the mining law so as to enable mining companies to expropriate property owners on behalf of the state was tabled by the Romanian parliament (2013) but subsequently withdrawn, a short time after major protests took place in Bucharest and other cities (Velicu 2015).

A third process which characterized the conflict over Roșia Montană was the involvement of a variety of national and international actors, which could not be neatly divided between an "environmentalist" and a "pro-mining" camp. The Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church together with other churches, the Romanian Academy and public and private universities were outspoken against the proposed project, most of them on more than one occasion. On the other hand, various political leaders and high-ranking state officials (viz. the president of Romania and the minister of the economy) have expressed favourable views with regard to the mining project. Internationally, the European Parliament (which dispatched a team of European MPs to Roșia Montană in 2003), the European Commission, the Council of Europe or different specialized bodies within these institutions took more or less explicit stances with regard to the Roșia Montană project. Things went even further than simply expressing views for or against the project. A resolution to ban the use of cyanide in mining – the preferred

extraction method in the Roşia Montană project - was adopted with overwhelming majority in the European Parliament (2010) but was subsequently rejected by the European Commission in the same year. Cyanide leaching thus remained an accepted extraction method for precious metals in the European Union (EU), of which Romania became a member in 2007.

In addition, a variety of journalists, filmmakers, actors, natural scientists, economists, historians, and philanthropists, among others, both Romanian and foreign have voiced their concerns and views about the proposed mining project. Musical, artistic, political, religious, civic events and meetings have been staged in Roşia Montană and elsewhere by all these actors. As a result, the problematique of Roşia Montană has ceased to be a purely "environmental" or a merely "local" one as different actors picked up different aspects of the case – archaeological, cultural, economic, political, developmental – to argue in favour or against the proposed mine.

Finally, the involvement of these actors raised the political and cultural stakes of the conflict[5] at the same time as the economic pressures to build the mine waxed and waned over time but generally followed an upward trend. The incentive to exploit "one of the world's few remaining undeveloped giant gold deposits" (Casey 2006), as one mining commentator put it, has grown in tandem with the mounting price of gold, which has increased 4.2 times between mid-2000 and mid-2010[6].

If anything, these changing contexts in which Roşia Montană found itself over the years made it almost impossible for both resident[7] and non-resident actors to clearly anticipate the

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[5] At different times, Roşia Montană has been touted the "oldest documented settlement in Romania", the "birthplace of the Romanian people", a unique European treasure, a test case for the rule of law in Romania etc. (Kocsis 2004; Soros Foundation Romania 2009)

[6] See the 20-year price of gold on goldprice.org

[7] As mentioned above in relation to the families which are members of Alburnus Maior, residence refers to property ownership or to spending one's life in Roşia Montană before the arrival of GR (1995).

course of events or even to have a complete picture of what is going on. This fact makes the case apposite for a study in the experience of place in all of its varied manifestations.

The argument advanced here makes sense only to the extent to which the struggle over place has played a determining role in the unfolding and the outcome of the conflict. In other words, to the extent to which Roșia Montană, its mountains, its people, its history resisted or reshaped hegemonic processes of resource extraction. As soon as the conflict shifted to the national level, with the first law that was custom-made to advance the RMGC project (Goțiu 2013), the shifting experiences of place became less consequential. This was further accentuated once the proposed mine in Roșia Montană became the subject of the international legal dispute. Until the ICSID will issue its verdict in 2020 or 2021, this book is also meant as a lively testimony of the transformations of Roșia Montană as a globalized place.

Chapter Two   More than Meets the Eye:
Roşia Montană in Conflict

Sociologists who study environmental conflicts, especially those involving natural resources, tend to focus on the visible contestants drawn into such struggles. On the one hand are the "resource extractors", including private companies and state-owned enterprises, and on the other are the opponents of extraction, bringing together sundry social movement organizations and, more often than not, grassroots or indigenous movements. Such approaches are often based on an implicit theory of globalization that assumes a power asymmetry between the extractors, which are usually global agents, mobilizing economic and political resources on a global scale, and the opponents who are in most cases local groups, sometimes aided by transnational activist networks. The predominant image characterizing such conflicts is that of a global, resource-hungry 'Goliath' confronting a local and peaceful 'David'.

The present book aims to challenge this image by proposing a new interpretation of local – global conflicts. The theoretical rationale for this challenge is a largely inadequate conceptualization of two important concepts that crop up repeatedly in studies of local – global confrontations, namely *conflict* and *local* (the latter used both as a noun and an adjective). In short, conflicts appear as polarizing forces, pitting the opponents, including local actors and their interests, worldviews and identities into irreconcilable conflict with the extractors, as incarnations of hegemonic power. The stakes of such conflicts are usually taken to be self-evident: resource-extraction vs. local resource stewardship, the imposition

of hegemonic power structures vs. local, grassroots-based democracies, capital-driven short-term exploitation vs. livelihood-driven long-term management of resources. The assumed polarization of the stakes tends to create a pre-determined image of the local as it confronts the global. The outcomes of this confrontation can be depicted along a single dimension, having at one extreme the resistance of the *local* against the "global intrusion" and at the other extreme the "colonization" of the *local* by the global.

Such interpretations have been aptly characterized by Doreen Massey (2005) as a "billiard-ball view of place". In contrast to this, this book aims to explore the dynamic transformation of the experience of place and of the *local* once it becomes caught in a local-global conflict. Henceforth, the *local* will be the object of explicit problematization. Rather than assuming a "total confrontation" which either leaves the *local* intact or radically remakes it according to the interests of the global, the focus of this approach is on two processes of *place transformation*, namely experience-distancing and experience-nearing. Drawing inspiration from Clifford Geertz's (1979) distinction between experience-near and experience-distant concepts, we use this opposition to refer to ways in which the experience of place is transformed. Experience-distancing refers to the removal/ downplaying of all the idiosyncratic elements of place in order to create an image that is understandable (and manageable) within extra-local and global frameworks. Experience-nearing is the opposite process, that is the invocation and mobilization of *local* experiences and *local* histories and geographies with the aim of challenging the decontextualized images of place created by experience-distancing. By exploring the distancing and nearing carried out by the various actors involved in the conflict over Roşia Montană, it is possible to understand the proliferation of various iconic images of place. Rather than assuming place as the "endpoint" of the global-to-local continuum, this approach will reveal how a plurality of

experiences of place - iconic places - co-exist in the same physical location and how these experiences are continuously transformed by experience-distancing and experience-nearing, as the conflict unfolds.

In order to construct this new perspective, it is important to analyse the theoretical limitations involved in current conceptualizations of environmental conflicts and in the different images of the local/of place put forward in environmental sociology and political ecology. After locating the research on local–global conflicts in the environmental sociological literature, the following two sections of this chapter will focus on the "trouble with conflict" using material from the Roşia Montană case in non-systematic comparison other cases around the world.

Grassroots Environmental Conflicts

Local and grassroots environmental struggles have enjoyed an increasing tide of interest in environmental sociology and anthropology, political geography and cultural studies. Environmental conflicts are usually approached in terms of environmental justice or, when used with reference to the Third World, as popular or grassroots environmentalism or the 'environmentalism of the poor' (Martinez-Alier 2005, 2014). Both concepts convey the idea that ecological distribution conflicts are caused by economic growth coupled with social inequalities. Whether the conflict centres on access to water, mineral resources or is due to exposure to contaminants, in all these cases poor and marginalized populations are subject to environmental injustices (Martinez-Alier 2005: 13-4). With increasing frequency over the last two decades, such conflicts have mobilized local populations in the form of grassroots movements, hence the sociological and anthropological interest for grassroots environmentalism. The Environmental Justice

Atlas provides a comprehensive overview of 246 environmental justice conflicts around gold mining (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2. 1: **The distribution of environmental justice conflicts around gold mines. Each orange dot is one conflict.**

Source: Temper, del Bene, and Martinez-Alier (2015, updated in 2020)

This form of environmental activism is new and distinct from mainstream environmentalism. While sociologists and environmental sociologists have long been preoccupied with environmental movements, both in terms of their internal organization and external strategies (an early example is the work of Riley Dunlap, 1972), the interest for popular environmentalism is more recent. Some of the initial key texts in this field are Robert Bullard's *Dumping in Dixie: Race, class, and environmental quality* (1990), Bron Taylor's edited volume *Ecological Resistance Movements: The Global Emergence of Radical and Popular Environmentalism* (1995) and Gould, Schnaiberg and Weinberg's *Local Environmental Struggles: Citizen Activism in the Treadmill of Production* (1996). Remarkably, the struggles in the Global South (Taylor 1995) and those in the

Global North (Gould et al. 1996) have received almost simultaneous attention.

Environmentalism was initially concerned with the protection of the natural world, either with its complete preservation (hence the current of preservationism) or its "wise use" in the form of conservationism (Lowe 2017[1989]). As a post-war protest movement against environmental threats that disable people, popular environmentalism set itself in contrast to the older forms of environmentalism. Grassroots environmental movements in the Third World have taken many forms but they all involve "struggles against environmental impacts that threaten poor people" (Martinez-Alier 2005: 12). The latter struggle against the advancement of "state and capitalist interests aiming to use and control local natural resource systems essential to local subsistence" (Kousis, 1997: 237-8). Taylor (1995: 2) described popular ecological resistance movements as composed of "nonmiddle-class, peasant, indigenous peoples and participants in underground economies" to which he later added "populist environmentalists". They usually emerge at the community level to fight against a specific threat to their lives and livelihoods (Freudenberg and Steinsapir, 1991: 237).

Following Guha (2000: 105) it can be argued that the distinguishing attribute of popular environmentalism is the fact that it combines environmental concerns with a more visible concern for social justice. Grassroots activists in the developed world sometimes criticized the national environmental organizations, such as the Sierra Club or Greenpeace, which 'still seem[ed] to be more interested in protecting threatened animal species from extinction than in protecting children from toxic pollutants' (Freudenberg and Steinsapir, 1991: 240). Similarly, neither the "cult of wilderness" nor the "gospel of eco-efficiency" (Martinez-Alier 2005) can easily accommodate within their frameworks the notion that the environment is not separate from the lives and livelihoods of local communities. In much of the Third world "reality is a seamless web of social and environmental

constraints which it makes little sense to atomise into mutually exclusively categories" (Cleary as cited in Guha 2000: 105).

What are the characteristics of a grassroots environmental conflict, as they are currently discussed in the literature? In answering this question, I aim to achieve two tasks in the remainder of this chapter. The first task is to outline the common wisdom in popular environmentalism research, while the second is to introduce the Roşia Montană conflict from a distinctly experience-distant perspective. In this context, experience-distant means that the account is presented in a way which is immediately understandable to both researchers and activists engaged in similar struggles around the world. This intelligibility is achieved, however, by a problematic form of distancing from the concreteness of place, which is nevertheless one of the strategies for advancing environmental justice.

The Trouble with Conflict

At first sight, the Roşia Montană case shares a number of similarities with other causes célèbres from around the world. First, a previously sustainable community was suddenly faced with the prospect of partial or total destruction by a large commercial mine. The environmental threat – in this case the use of the cyanide-in-leach technology – played a central role in the concern expressed by anti-mining activists in Roşia Montană. Similarly, the opponents of the Bergama gold project in Turkey coined the term 'cyanide-laden gold' (Arsel 2005: 268) to denounce this controversial extraction method. Romanian and European activists seemed justified in expecting environmental degradation at Roşia Montană since the region experienced a major cyanide spill in January 2000 described as the 'worst disaster since Chernobyl'. An estimated 10,000 cubic meters of water containing cyanide and heavy metals overflowed from the

tailings pond of the 'Aurul' gold mine in Baia Mare (in Northern Romania) and affected 2,000 km of the Danube catchment area in Romania, Hungary and Yugoslavia (Argeşeanu Cunningham 2005: 99, 105).

Second, this intrusion created resistance at the grassroots level. Ban and Romanţan provided a very insightful explanation of how the "save Roşia Montană" campaign emerged in a political environment characterized by a dearth of activist traditions (Ban and Romanţan 2007: 2). In referring to the organization of the movement at the local level, they stated:

> The resistance against the RMGC project emerged in September 2000, when a number of villagers from Roşia Montană, Corna and Bucium led by mining-engineer-turned-farmer Eugen David openly affirmed their opposition to the project and established an NGO (Alburnus Maior) to represent themselves. The grassroots nature of what was to later become a transnational environmental movement was thus firmly established (Ban and Romanţan 2007: 6).

This quote suggests that the transnational networking which connects local grassroots movements on the one hand and national and international NGOs on the other, did not alter the popular character of the movement. On the contrary, grassroots environmental struggles were seen to enjoy widespread popular support. This took the form of broad-based alliances linking local farmers with national and international environmental activists, academics, local and national politicians and artists. Similarly, a massive protest against the Phulbari mine in Bangladesh mobilized no less than 60,000 participants (Faruque 2017). In three grassroots protests against hazardous and geothermal projects in Greece, "men and women, old and young, from all occupational and class groups, volunteered to carry out the goals of their movement." (Kousis 1997: 254). Starting with approximately 350 supporters gathered at a meeting in Roşia Montană in 2002, the movement was catalysed by several music concerts ("Hay Fest") in Roşia Montană, attended by

approximately 2,000 participants in 2004[8], 10,000 in 2005[9] almost 15,000 in 2006[10] and about 7,000 participants in 2007[11].

Third, grassroots movements have local leaders which at times play the role of iconic figures, acquiring the status of local heroes. For example, Tanaka Shozo (1841 – 1913), who became the father of Japanese environmentalism, came from a "tradition of pro-peasant environmental justice" (Martinez-Alier 2003: 203). The Kayapo leader Payakan attained high international visibility as a symbol of the struggle to save the Brazilian rainforest (Conklin and Graham, 1995: 695). Godofredo García Baca, the leader of the movement against the Tambogrande mine in Peru, was an icon for the peasant struggle before and after his assassination in 2001 (Muradian et al. 2003: 780). In the campaign against the Bergama mine, Sefa Taşkin, the former mayor of the city and experienced international activist, played a prominent role (Arsel 2005: 274). No less recognized was Eugen David, the chairman of Alburnus Maior. After being awarded a prize for Lifetime Achievement at the International Transylvanian Film Festival (2006), actress Vanessa Redgrave made an usual move by saying that:

> I would like to dedicate this award to Eugen David. I am convinced that you know him. He is a former miner and at the same time the main actor in the campaign to Save Roşia Montană. Saving this area is not only a local problem; it is a Romanian problem and a European problem and one of the entire world. Our planet is dying and we have no right to destroy an ecosystem[12].

Fourth, the stakes of the conflict are not reducible to the environmental issues alone, since popular environmental struggles expressly focus on livelihood issues. Colley (2002: 20)

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[8] http://fanfest.rosiamontana.ro/2004/presa.shtml?AA_SL_Session=b79b 60 69c300a33cea1027343b00f939&x=345

[9] http://fanfest.rosiamontana.ro/2005/ro/presa.shtml?slice_id=24e0ec53c 992edc940b7fd2ec3c58c28&x=893

[10] http://fanfest.rosiamontana.ro/2k6/index.php?lang=ro#_ftn1

[11] http://www.evz.ro/articole/detalii-articol/457527/FanFest-pentru-initiati/

[12] http://www.rosiamontana.org/documents/english/press/redgrave2006.htm (cited November 2, 2007)

contended that the actions of mining companies represent one of the clearest points of conflict between large-scale western economic activity on the one hand, and small-scale indigenous and self-sufficient communities, on the other. Muradian et al. (2003: 778) discussed the case of the Tambogrande conflict, located in one of the poorest departments in Peru, in similar terms. The situation at Roşia Montană seemed to be no different:

> Here we have a very sleepy valley, populated by farmers and people going about their own business. Beautiful place, small communities, traditional life. You also have very special archaeology - Roman mine workings, a mausoleum, temples, the remains of a great Roman civilisation. And what Gabriel wants to do is build an open cast mine. This means basically you blow up mountains, take away the rock in trucks and then use cyanide to extract gold from it. You're left with an extremely toxic sludge, laced with cyanide and mercury and other poisons. This is then dumped into a tailing pond - essentially a lake of poison which will cover hundreds of hectares of this valley (Roth cited in Kingsnorth 2005: 44).

Given that opencast mining requires access to large land surfaces, operations such as the one at Roşia Montană involved the displacement of local populations (Downing, 2002). Opposition to more or less forced relocation is common in poor communities (Gordon and Webber, 2008: 79; Muradian et al. 2003: 783). In analysing the grassroots opposition to a mining project in Ecuador, for example, Kuecker (2007) commented on a leaked environmental impact study: "More ominous, [the study] estimated that 100 families would be displaced by the mine, which would require the flooding of a populated valley for its waste disposal" (Kuecker 2007: 102). In the same manner, Roth talked about the threat of displacement for "700 subsistence farmers [who] will loose their land and will have to be resettled" from Roşia Montană (Roth, 2004a). In fact, consistent with the arguments in the grassroots environmentalism literature, Roth insisted that she and her colleagues are not simply "environmental activists":

> If you look at the definition of Alburnus Maior, AM is a community organization that was founded in 2000 by families in Roşia

Montană, property owners who opposed the Gabriel Resources project on social, environmental, cultural and economic grounds (Roșia Montană, 2007).

Don Kalb wrote about a *New Eldorado* in Romania, in which the local path of development was threatened to be torn apart by the Roșia Montană project, for which World Bank funding was being considered:

> There are 750 family farms in this valley that live by what the land brings and their situation will deteriorate once resettled on new lands with low fertility and decreased water access. Many of these family farms are part of complex household economies in which 'traditional' mining is one of the occupations (Kalb 2006: 109).

The "trouble with conflict" stems from the fact that as persuasive as this image of a conflict between a community and corporation seems to be, and as consistent with other cases from around the world, it is somewhat inaccurate. Two ways at looking at the problem with conflict suggest themselves: on the one hand, does the account given by Roth, Kalb and others capture in its entirety what has been going on at Roșia Montană? On the other, what is left out of this account but is potentially relevant to understand the conflict?

Conflict more Complex than Previously Thought

One can begin by mentioning some basic observations. Although the project developers intended to displace almost 1000 households (RMGC 2006a), Alburnus Maior emerged with a membership of only 300 families (and an additional 100 families from the nearby village of Bucium) (Greenpeace 2006). The membership of AM even declined over the years and Roth estimated the membership of Alburnus Maior in 2007 at 100 – 150 members. Moreover, the emergence of AM as a *grassroots organization* did not prevent about three quarters of the 1000 households to sell their properties to RMGC (see the section below

'The Industrial Landscape: "Sterilizing" History and Displacing People'). Admittedly, this happened under substantial pressure from the mining company. This declining popularity of AM among the residents of Roşia Montană stood in stark contrast with the unexpected success of the movement. In September 2007, after legal challenges staged by NGOs from the "Save Roşia Montană" campaign (including AM), which resulted in the invalidation of a key certificate needed for the project, the Environment Minister decided to suspend the evaluation of the RMGC project.

As part of the field research that I carried out (2005 – 2008), slightly more than half of 82 respondents answered the question of which organization or person defends their interests, by saying 'I don't know' or 'nobody'[13]. Only 37 per cent of these respondents named one or several organizations or persons: 20 per cent mentioned opponents of the project and 17 per cent supporters. Furthermore, when asked to rate their "trust" in AM, 70 respondents gave an average score of 3,9 on a scale of 1 "very much trust" to 5 "no trust at all" (4, the value closest to 3,9 was "little trust").

Admittedly a crude assessment of the popularity of AM, these facts and figures[14] raised some doubts about how stable the "grassroots" character of the conflict at Roşia Montană is. It seemed rather that the opposition was somewhat funnel-shaped with a relatively narrow base at the local level but quite developed at the level of national and transnational activist networks.

The conflict over Roşia Montană has certainly made international headlines. The *New York Times*, *International Herald Tribune, the BBC*, *the Guardian*, *Globe and Mail*, the *National Post, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* etc. have featured articles and ads about the fate of a community that could rise or fall with the waves of a mining renaissance in Eastern Europe (Danielson,

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[13] In some cases, the answer was implicit.
[14] The respondents who provided these answers were not randomly selected but rather with the aim of increasing attitudinal and geographic diversity.

2005). Celebrities such as billionaire and philanthropist George Soros, environmentalist Teddy Goldsmith and Vanessa Redgrave have been directly or indirectly involved in the conflict over Roşia Montană. The documentaries "New Eldorado" by Tibor Kocsis (2004) and "Roșia Montană – Town on the Brink" by Fabian Daub (2012) were distinguished with awards at several European and other film festivals. Fears that the rich archaeological and architectural heritage of Roşia Montană could fall victim to the four-pit opencast mine have motivated a two-month exhibit at the German Mining Museum in Bochum, Germany, showcasing "The Gold of the Carpathians: Gold-Mining in Roşia Montană" (2001).

The suspicion that the open and articulate opposition to the Roşia Montană project might be more funnel-shaped than the activists of the "save Roşia Montană" campaign might like to admit was eagerly seized by the PR department of RMGC. They commissioned Irish filmmaker Phelim McAleer to make a documentary on Roşia Montană. RMGC had allegedly "no editorial control" over the filmmaker, but the movie produced, entitled "Mine your own business", became known as the "world's first anti-environmentalist documentary" (Strausbaugh 2007). In it, environmentalists were represented as misanthropists interested only in the pursuit of their green values and ideals and being unconcerned with the fates of local poor people. The movie received extensive attention, including a live debate on FoxNews between McAleer and John Passacantando, the executive director of Greenpeace USA in 2006.

In terms of the distinction introduced above, Roşia Montană has been subject to various experience-distancing efforts, each of them aiming to provide an iconic image of this place, sensitive to either anti-mining or pro-mining interests. The result of these processes has been a transformation of place as a "place in itself" – acquiring meaning for a broader, extra-local politics in which places become symbols in political struggles. At the same time, this transformation threatened to "stifle the living processes that gave birth to it" (Harvey 2001: 193).

These active processes were revealed, in part, through the ethnographic research on which this book is based. Caught in the middle of an evolving conflict, the local actors from Roşia Montană have used a variety of strategies to capitalize on the opportunities and avoid the risks that have emerged through the transformation of their place (cf. for a theoretical treatment on actors' choices and actions see Baldus 2016). It is the tension between iconic and lived place that this book aims to bring to the fore, to understand the contradictory effects of experience-nearing and -distancing.

In fact, there are theoretical reasons to expect this. Ray Murphy (1994: 167) has convincingly argued that in environmental conflicts, the visible sides of the struggle cannot provide an accurate basis for distinguishing contributors, beneficiaries, and victims of environmental degradation nor, by extension, the multiple stakes of such conflicts (Murphy 1994: 167). My argument is that there are a great number of micro and macro conflicts, the former mostly unknown and unrecognized, the latter more visible and publicly debated, that overlap in a kaleidoscope of confrontations.

No one would doubt the fact that there was a conflict between supporters and opponents of the Roşia Montană mine, between RMGC and its governmental and non-governmental supporters on the one hand and the NGO/academic/political coalition reunited under the banner to "save Roşia Montană", on the other. There was, indeed, a conflict between the values espoused by Stephanie Roth or Eugen David and those of the formal or informal representatives of the company. The big picture of hegemonic vs. counter-hegemonic values and worldviews obscured, however, the many facets of the "daily, immediate conflicts", as Horowitz (2002) called them, that complicate the visible lines of cleavage. No one denies that fact that there were clashes between the big values of "economy" vs. "environment" or between "the short and the long-term" but there were also the unmentioned conflicts between those who have a choice to resist

and those who lack this choice, or between different ways to "struggle for Roşia Montană". The many kinds of minute conflicts cannot be subsumed under the heading of the big conflicts and they cannot be dismissed as secondary or circumstantial either. In fact, the tendency to regard only the "major" conflict between those supporting and those opposing the project as the only conflict shows that something is amiss in our understanding of what goes in conflicts similar to the one at Roşia Montană.

Why do the many, immediate conflicts at Roşia Montană and in similar cases of clashes between corporate Goliaths and community Davids remain unrecognized in the literature? One of the more important reasons points to the problem of the stakes of the conflict. The stakes of environmental conflicts are of crucial importance in the political struggles over nature and natural resources (and for the livelihoods based on them) for both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic actors. For this reason they often remain unproblematized because the stakes seem too "obvious" to merit explanation. Does anyone need to hear more than the bare fact that at Roşia Montană, "sleepy valleys" and "small communities" are threatened by "cyanide contamination" and that "local residents will be driven off their lands"? Or, if one takes the view of the project supporters such as McAleer, it seems obvious that the closure of the state-owned mine created "high unemployment" which can lead to "economic extinction" for the miners of Roşia Montană if the new project RMGC were not approved. Furthermore, it seemed that only a privately financed project can solve the "historic pollution" of the notoriously inefficient socialist mining sector.

For any self-conscious participant in environmental conflicts it is clear what the stakes are. The stakes themselves cannot be negotiated because they are the *raison d'être* of the ideological positions in the struggle, either for or against any environment-altering project, that is of environmentalism or extractivism (Martinez-Alier and Walter, 2016). By environment is meant not only the physical, natural environment but any spatial

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distribution of socially defined plenty or scarcity over which groups struggle. Plenty or scarcity are concentrated in given places and all environmental struggles, such as the ones in the resource-extraction sites of the world, can be seen as efforts to redistribute plenty and scarcity according to the interests of various groups. The stakes of the conflict lie in a given distribution of plenty and scarcity and, for this reason, are seen by the actors involved to be the intrinsic characteristics of a place. But are these characteristics really an essential part of place? Are the gold deposit, or the historic landscape of Roşia Montană or any number of descriptions of what is at stake about this place, as indissolubly tied to this place as they were written large on the banners of those opposing or supporting the controversial mining project? This issue leads to my third chapter which will discuss "the trouble with the local" or, in other words, the sociological views of local communities and how they can be reconceptualised in a dynamic understanding of place.

Chapter Three Interpretations of the Local: Towards a Dynamic Understanding of Place

Communities are More than Grassroots Movements

In the second chapter I have argued that, in analysing environmental conflicts, one should not assume beforehand that the active contestants – project developers and opponents – represent all that an environmental conflict is about. In fact, such conflicts involve a much more intricate network of actors, interests, representations and relationships that cannot be forced into just two polar categories of opponents and supporters of a given extractive project. Research in environmental sociology acknowledged this higher level of complexity:

> Local activism and regional, national, and international coalitions working in concert towards some common end are dynamic sociological phenomena, but aside these is the almost inescapable presence of community. Shift the focus from local activists to the more inclusive idea of community, and a somewhat different, often more complicated, picture emerges (Gunter and Kroll-Smith 2007: 2).

The fact that local environmental struggles involve more than 'pitting local Davids against corporate Goliaths' has also been acknowledged in environmental sociology (Gould et al. 1996: 3-4). In fact, a spate of studies focusing on environmental conflicts have shown that what is at stake in such conflicts is much more complex than local populations fighting in unison to preserve their environments and communities against greedy or

irresponsible 'developers'. The discussion that follows focuses on the growing literature on mining conflicts, but the insights offered by this research are more widely applicable.

To begin, such evidence can be partly gleaned from the grassroots environmentalism literature itself, which has been briefly mentioned in the second chapter. In the Bergama case in Turkey, the local population initially welcomed the arrival of a global mining company. At first, different social groups were hopeful of their economic future: the company paid generous amounts for the land it purchased, businesses in the city of Bergama expected windfalls from trade with the company and local peasants even contemplated the possibility of setting up a heavy-truck cooperative to work with and for the mining company (Arsel 2005: 267). It was only after several incidents of pollution, during the preparatory activities for the new mine, that the population became mobilized into what became 'the most important environmental social movement in Turkey' (Arsel 2005: 267). This suggests that perceptions of risks and opportunities are not uniform but vary over time. Opposition to mining projects is also contextual, depending on the inhabitants' interpretations of risk (Dwivedi 2002). In some cases, local residents become ambivalent in their assessment of the risks of a particular project *after* their active involvement. Particularly interesting is the testimony of a resister to strip mining in Knott County, Appalachia, during the early 1970s:

> Well, we didn't have anything to offer the local people except in our organization protecting their land. We didn't have anything to feed them with, we didn't have anything to work their sons with. We didn't have any jobs to offer their children or their husbands. [....] I think it was at that point [after the violence] that I realized we were up against a real complicated and very powerful situation. I think I had not realized how complex it was because of not seeing how deeply the job situation was involved with the issue of strip mining (Bingman 1993: 28).

The fact that environmental conflicts are intertwined with other social conflicts also goes deep into European mining

history. A strike by miners and peasants against the Rio Tinto mining company in Spain was ended in bloodshed by the army in 1888. Historians debated whether miners complained because pollution prevented them from working on certain days, thus forsaking part of their incomes, or if they complained against the effects of pollution on their and their families' health (Martinez-Alier 2002: 205).

In a remarkable study on the Ipili population of Papua New Guinea, Golub (2006: 288) explained that the success of this indigenous group in extracting substantial benefits from the developers of the Porgera mine profoundly challenged 'first world fantasies': 'Activists interested in finding "guardians of the forest" in Porgera will be disappointed indeed at the alacrity with which the Ipili, as they say, "traded their mountain for development".' Against the essentialist interpretation of Ipili as 'noble savages', Golub (2006: 266) argued that their behaviour is not simply the consequence of their 'corruption' from a 'pure' state before European contact, but a re-articulation of deep-seated themes in their culture which are entirely understandable given their unique historical circumstances. In a different case, Walton and Barnett (2008) discovered that beyond the visible 'environmental conflict' surrounding the Tolukuma Gold Mine in Papua New Guinea lurked various intracommunity and spatial inequalities. The authors discovered that landowners did not oppose the mine *per se* but rather its environmental effects and the unequal distribution of adequate compensation payments (Walton and Barnett 2008: 11).

In her study of the Koniambo nickel project in New Caledonia, Horowitz (2002) discovered among members of the Kanak population a near-universal desire for economic development brought by the project. However, some groups wanted to make sure that they did not lose control over the land. Among the latter, some emphasized the maintenance of local ecosystems and cultural heritage and appeasing the area's spirits (Horowitz 2002: 36). By comparing the Koniambo project with the Goro project located also in New Caledonia, Ali and Grewal (2006: 383) discovered that the

response of the Kanak community to the two projects was not simply a positional resistance, as many environmental activists assumed, but rather a combination of cautious and differentiated pragmatism. Women's engagements with mining companies – as negotiation or resistance – has also been recognized, pointing to a previously unexplored source of intra-community differences (Horowitz 2017).

In a book-length study of mining conflicts in Peru, Szablowski (2007) pointed out that a diverse and differentiated Andean population should not be expected to uniformly reject mineral projects. On the contrary, communities face (at least) two conflicting interests: on the one hand, the desire and hope for new economic opportunities and on the other hand the apprehension of losing lands and livelihoods (Szablowski 2007: 150). Indeed, the loss of livelihood is a terrifying experience because sudden impoverishment is worse than stable subsistence (Parasuraman 1999).

The Recent Focus on Community in Environmental Sociology

The focus on community has been advocated since the early days of environmental sociology. In the characteristically radical tone of the 1980s, Catton (1982) claimed that the human community cannot be separated from the animal and plant kingdoms. Because human beings can never be self-sufficient, the very term 'human community' is a mere shorthand for a biotic community dominated by humans. Bell (2011) elevated community to a central role in his comprehensive vision of environmental sociology: 'environmental sociology is the study of community in the largest possible sense' (Bell 2011: 3). Barry (2007: 232) also made an argument for the increasing role of 'localisation' of the economy in a sustainable society and thus, implicitly, for the importance of self-reliant local communities. In their list of 'twenty questions in environmental sociology', Gould and Lewis (2014)

raised the issue of the environmental needs of communities and asked how they can be addressed, especially when they conflict with those of national economies or the global environment.

In a globalizing world, local communities are increasingly acknowledged as important sites of environmental struggles and solutions. Gunter and Kroll-Smith (2007: 6) claimed that global environmental change will be experienced more and more as a 'local community trouble', as the dramatic example of Hurricane Katrina suggested. In the Indian context, communities were at the centre of environmental struggles because the encroachment on their natural resources meant, at the same time, the undermining of local livelihoods by industrial interests (Guha 2006: 63). On a more positive note, the resolution of environmental problems, including global ones, is often attempted from the local level (Yearley 1996). There is, however, a considerably longer history to the society – nature symbiosis, extending its roots into classical sociology.

The Historical Roots of a Human – Nature Symbiosis
The link between community and the natural environment has not emerged with modern environmentalism. It certainly goes back to Tönnies (Dickens 1992). For the pre-eminent early theorist of community, '*Gemeinschaft* by blood, denoting unity of being, was developed and differentiated into Gemeinschaft of locality, which was based on a common habitat.' (Tönnies 1957: 42). On the other side of the Atlantic, in the early days of American sociology, McClenahan defined community as:

> A social unit with certain territorial boundaries, perhaps definitely established, more probably, unconsciously defined by certain psycho-social factors such as common interests, attitudes, values, customs, laws, and institutions; possessing a degree of functioning unity and self-sufficing (McClenahan 1929: 106).

The author added, however, that the boundaries of community are indefinite or more or less arbitrarily fixed. In his study on

little communities, Redfield (1955) began his analysis of the 'human whole' by treating community as an 'ecological system'. He treated the notion of ecological system not only as a natural framework to study life in the community but also as a heuristic device that enabled him to see human and non-human life as a whole (Redfield 1955: 17, 19 ff.).

Synthetic approaches to the meanings of community routinely linked social life at the local level with the confines of a more or less precisely delimited geographic area. In a pioneering study of 'community concepts', for example, Gillette (1926: 678) discovered that, of 61 publications analysed, almost three-fourths (44) 'confined the idea and term to small local areas, such as open country areas or villages'. Similarly, of the 94 definitions of community identified by Hillery (1955), almost three-fourths mentioned 'geographic area' and 'social interaction' as defining characteristics of communities (Hillery 1955: 118). Moreover, Hillery believed that rural sociologists, who always included geographic area in their definitions of community, may have actually been 'closer to the actual core of the community concept' (Hillery 1955: 119). Although Bell and Newby (1971) refrained from giving a definition of community, they included in their 'community studies' only those that were concerned with the study of the *interrelationships* of social institutions *in a locality*' (Bell and Newby 1971: 19, emphasis added).

On the other hand, the notion that communities can be identified by their spatial characteristics has been heavily criticized. For example, Pahl (1966: 322) argued that 'any attempt to tie particular patterns of social relationships to specific geographical milieux is a singularly fruitless exercise.' Similarly, Stacey claimed that the problem with any territorially based definition of community is that no system of social relations has any geographic boundary except a global one (1969: 136). Communities are imagined, argued Griswold (1992: 711), and added that the particular Western view of 'the community', appeared to be unyielding to sociological deconstruction.

As will be argued in the second part of this chapter, the issue is not so much whether communities can or cannot be linked to a particular area but rather *how* and *why* places and communities are seen as overlapping or divergent. This is one of the novel contributions of this book, that is to link the transformation of place to that of community relationships and, possibly, to environmental justice. For the moment, however, I shall continue the investigation of 'community' in one particular area, namely the sociology of the mining community.

There is one type of communities for which the association with a specific geographic area seems unavoidable: these are the mining communities. It is an obvious fact that communities specialized in mining can only emerge where ore deposits are located. Early on, however, Thompson (1932) made an observation which is the source of an interesting paradox: the very fixity of mining communities contrasts with the fact that mines are 'interregional and frequently world-wide in the extent of [their] economic relations.' The extraction and processing of minerals is not well suited for household use only. Barter and trade usually arise with the development of mineral deposits, even in its incipient phases (Kautsky 1925 as cited in Thompson 1932: 607). From the very beginning then, the most 'geographically determined' communities are also those who depend most on extra-local and indeed global markets.

In his seminal article on "Sociological Models of the Mining Community", Bulmer (1975) paralleled Redfield's quest for an understanding of communities as 'human wholes'. His ideal type of the mining community – at the core of which is the relationship between humans and the ground they inhabit – is worth quoting at length:

> The traditional mining community is characterised by the prevalence of communal social relationships among miners and their families which are multiplex in form. The social ties of work, leisure, family, neighbourhood and friendship overlap to form close-knit and interlocking *locally based* collectivities of actors.

> The solidarity of the community is strengthened not only by these features of themselves but by a shared history of living and working in *one place* over a long period of time. From this pattern derives the mutual aid characteristic in adversity and through this pattern is reinforced the inward-looking focus on the *locality*, derived from occupational homogeneity and social and *geographical isolation* from the rest of society. Meaningful social interaction is confined almost exclusively to the *locality* (Bulmer 1975: 87-8, emphases added).

Bulmer was not alone in his view of mining communities. For Kerr and Siegel (1954: 191), miners fromed an 'isolated mass', a 'race apart' given that 'they live in their own separate communities'. Geology seemed to be the major force that gave mining communities a unique character in the same way in which it had created the ore deposits: "Since their work is dangerous as well as extremely vulnerable economically, [miners] depend for their survival and precarious prosperity on a spirit of fierce solidarity." (Lipset and Bendix 1951: 244). When combined with the levelling influence of capitalist methods of production, the work in mines and, one might venture, the organization of mining communities, followed "the same principles as a gold mine anywhere" (Gluckman 1963: 221 – 222). For a long time, therefore, the mining community had appeared in the social sciences as an entity closely shaped by geology and demography.

Current Views of the Community – Environment Nexus

The link between community in general and its environmental substratum has received a more sophisticated interpretation in cultural studies. Whitt and Slack (1994) argued for a non-anthropocentric vision of communities as interrelationships of solidarity and significance between their human and non-human elements. Furthermore, these links between humans and nature acquired a deep political meaning:

> It is from within communities - these complex articulations of the human and other than human - that effective political resistance

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is originating, and it is within them that hegemony and oppression are experienced" (Whitt and Slack 1994: 20 – 21).

Along the same lines, Hay (1994) saw the link between nature and social life as a basis for political action:

> To recover 'home' is thus to recover 'community', by which is implied not simply meaningful social interaction, but the built fabric and natural processes that are essential components of one's 'significant environment'. To fight for home and community is thus to fight the debilitating and degrading alienation that, so many contemporary prophets have rightly informed us, is the modern condition (Hay 1994, cited in Hay 2002: 164).

It is obvious that community is a powerful concept and it is small wonder that it has been employed in numerous studies of 'resistance' – resistance against the forces of capital which threaten to take apart the unity of humans and nature embodied by 'communities'. For example, a whole issue of *Cultural Survival Quarterly* (25.1) dealt with 'indigenous communities' as protagonists in mining conflicts (Ali and Behrendt 2001: 8). In a review of the anthropology of mining, Ballard and Banks (2003: 290) saw the community – alongside the corporation and the state – as 'one of the fundamental components of any analysis'. Furthermore, at a conference organized under the title 'Rethinking Extractive Industry: Regulation, Dispossession and Emerging Claims' (York University, Toronto, March 5 – 7, 2009), almost half of the sixty-one papers presented included 'community' in their title or abstract. In her review of resistance to mining, Conde (2017) still used the concept of community, although she acknowledged that it has been "challenged on many occasions as ignoring the complexity of actors, different interests and the institutions that it entails" (Conde 2017: 81). Several of these challenges are outlined in the next section.

The Limits of the Community Concept

For all its rich history and political potency, the community concept seems unable to expand the theoretical horizons of research on environmental conflicts and environmental justice, for two reasons. On the one hand, in the history of social thought, community has always been understood as a *terminus*: social life begins or ends with community. In both a historical and a geographical sense, community marks the limits of society. On the other hand, the concept of community functions in sociological thinking like a Leibnizian monad which can be explained only with reference to itself rather than as part of a dialectical relationship with the outside world.

To overcome these limitations, I propose a new understanding of the local as linked to the *transformation of place* and *the experience of place* and how both of these shape notions of environmental justice. This can provide a much richer and intellectually stimulating understanding of environmental justice conflicts of the type described at the beginning of the chapter. In what follows I will outline the two reasons for which community itself does not seem to be a fruitful analytical concept. In order to understand the significance of place as a site of conflicts it is important to explore the role of the two dimensions in relation to which place becomes sociologically significant, namely space and time. The sociological roots of these concepts – as they can be found in rather implicit form in environmental sociology and sociology in general - will be sought in the next two sections of this chapter.

Historically, the idea that 'community'-like forms marked the beginning of social life had received many names: mechanical solidarity (Durkheim), sacred society (Becker), status-based society (Maine), folk society (Redfield), military society (Spencer) and obviously *Gemeinschaft* (Tönnies) (Pahl 1966: 300). What connectem them all was the fact that they stood at the beginning

of an evolutionary sequence which led, eventually, to modern society. Community was the assumed original stage that was premised on a 'natural' relationship among human beings and between humans and nature. This view was held long ago by Tocqueville and his words probably do not sound very unfamiliar even to contemporary readers: 'The village or township is the only association which is so perfectly natural, that, wherever a number of men are collected, it seems to constitute itself' (Tocqueville 1862: 74). Because in most cases community was used as a self-explanatory term which did not need to be conceptualized in any depth (Gunter and Kroll-Smith 2007: 2) it is my contention that it continues to influence in subtle ways even current representations of contemporary 'communities'. For this reason, in a recent study of mining-induced conflicts in Peru, Szablowski (2007) felt the need to dispel some of the common misconceptions commonly attached to the concept of community. He showed that, contrary to prevailing discourses, Andean rural populations are not solidaristic, they are not defined exclusively by subsistence livelihoods, they are not entirely isolated and, finally, they are 'indigenous' not because of their history but rather for purposes of political action (Szablowski 2007: 141-8). Although contemporary writers are not likely to use the words of Tönnies or Tocqueville, they use the term community as if it were a 'first principle' of social reality, a self-evident building block beyond which there is not much to be explained.

From a geographical point of view, community can be said to lie at the margins of social life, at the border between the natural and the social worlds. For example, Sorokin and Zimmerman (1969[1929]: 17, 56) described the differences between the rural and the urban worlds in terms of a continuum that reached into the natural environment at one end and is 'wrapped in a thick blanket of artificial culture' at the other. In his innovative study of the place of 'nature' in the experiences of the residents of Childerley, an English exurban village, Bell (1994) discovered that villagers sharply separated country life form city life: 'in all

their varied forms for varied villagers, nature and community are the hedgerows that bound and define countryside talk' (Bell 1994: 95). For Gunter and Kroll-Smith, 'community is ground zero in the human experience of the environment' (2007: 6).

In other cases, the notion that community has been *ab origine* in close contact with nature is suggested indirectly. In discussing the topic of nature writing, Lopez (1997: 23) claimed that the actual focus is 'not [on] nature but [on] the evolving structure of communities from which nature has been removed, often as a consequence of modern economic development.' Building on Giddens, Barry (2007) similarly reiterated the idea that community, in its rural form, was in some form of close contact with nature. He claimed that urbanisation removed the environment from everyday human life, thus implicitly suggesting that before the advent of urban modernity, life in rural communities gave a sense of 'being within the "natural order"' (Barry 2007: 105).

The notion that communities have traditionally been conceptualized as closed microcosms – with all their meanings bound to the local social and natural setting – can be inferred from debates about their 'erosion'. This view seemingly allows for only one dimension on which communities can be located – closer or farther away from the original *Gemeinschaft*. The multi-faceted interrelationships between the inside and the outside of a community are left unexamined. The interpretation of the experience of place will focus precisely on these relationships between the local and the extra-local.

Community vs. Place: The Sociological Perspective

This book is based on the concept of *place*, which is proposed as a conceptual tool for understanding the dynamic transformations of the *local* in environmental justice conflicts. In what follows, place will be conceptualized as a way to overcome the limitations

of the traditional sociological concept of 'community'. As the above review of sociological definitions of community suggests, communities are identified, at a minimum, as 'the physical space where people live' (Minar and Greer 1969: 47) or, in other words, as places. For some authors, places simply set 'the stage for man, the actor' (Wirth 1945: 487 – 8). In more recent scholarship it was argued that there is a more profound link between place and 'communal vitality' (Hay 2002: 164), or that communities and their constitutive environments are inseparable (Whitt and Slack 1994: 22). Rather than dealing with a concept of community which hosts a variety of meanings, it seems preferable to refresh the sociological vision with a more comprehensive and heuristically valuable concept of place.

The *place* concept proposed here involves first of all loosening the two conceptual bonds that have unduly restricted the free movement of 'community' in sociological thinking. First, one has to untie the spatial and temporal knots that kept 'community' – conceptually speaking - at the 'borders' between social and natural life. What were previously historically and geographically determined communities become 'volatile places' (to use the phrase coined by Gunter and Kroll-Smith, 2007). In a globalizing world, places are not confined to the endpoint of any geographical or historical continuum. Places can emerge at a variety of scales and take on the characteristics of all the different levels that span the continuum between the local and the global.

Conceptual steps in this direction have already been made. For example, Cronon (1992), the environmental historian, explored the history of Konnecott mining town, by following 'the paths out of town – *the connections between this lonely place and the rest of the world.*' (1992: 33, emphasis added). This place emerged, both before and after its mining history, at the intersection of trading and tourism routes, which were organized at different spatial scales (local, national and even international).

Second, unlike communities, places do not have a unique identity. Following Castells (2000), it is useful to recognize that

places allow for multiple experiences. The concept of community – with its etymological roots in the Latin word 'commūnis'[15] (common) – is an entity identical to itself. As conventionally conceived, community cannot include contradictions or divergent trajectories among its elements, whether human or non-human. Places, on the other hand, can be conceived as the playground of contradictory forces, as unstable assemblages of human and natural elements which coexist for some time but which can be broken asunder in the process of historical change. The constancy and cohesion implied by the term community are rendered problematic by the concept of place. Furthermore, place experiences can include contrasting images, such as lively or dead places, beautiful or ugly places and so on. The conventional view of community does not allow for it to be seen in the same way. It makes no sense to talk of a deserted or a dead community – in this case it is not a community anymore. Table 3.1 provides a systematic overview of the differences between 'community' and the new concept of *place* proposed here.

Table 3. 1: **Comparison between the classical sociological view of community and the proposed concept of place**

Dimension	Community	Place
Time	Community marks the beginning or end of modernity and is portrayed as either 'traditional' or 'utopian'	Place does not have a definite position in time; it can combine any conceivable mix of 'traditional' and 'modern' elements.
	Social change is seen as a disintegrative force: *Gemeinschaft* becomes *Gesellschaft*, locally-based/indigenous identity becomes European modernity (e.g. Escobar 2008: 13)	There is no discernible direction in which places move – places are 'historically contingent processes' (Pred 1984) Unlike communities, places do not presuppose any predetermined direction of the relationship between social and

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[15] http://www.answers.com/main/ntquery?gov=0&searchType=ra&s= community &go.x=0&go.y=0 (cited 24 March 2009).

Dimension	Community	Place
	At other times, social change is the desired path towards an idealized 'community' of the future (Bauman 2001) Communities are, in a sense, ahistorical.	natural life – neither disintegration nor re-constitution of a lost unity. As places traverse history, they receive the successive layers of events that happen within them
	In classical sociology it was the disintegration of communities, brought about by modernity, which attracted sociological interest (Bauman 2001: 34)	Places emerge into the scholarly consciousness once they are transformed by globalization, by time-space compression (Harvey 1999), by the 'space of flows' (Castells 2000), by the emerging risk society (Beck 1992), by the disembedding of social relationships (Giddens 1990). This is because all these processes bring various scales into intense contact and conflict with each other. Unlike communities, their transformation is not pre-determined.
Space	Communities are at the border of society and nature – seen as forms of social life "close to nature" and described as isolated, remote, far, marginal or peripheral etc.	Places can be close to nature or alien to it, they can be artificial or natural and they can include degraded or "pristine" environments.
	Usually confined to the local end of the local – global continuum	Places can be everywhere on the local – global continuum and, more importantly, the same place can co-exist at several scales at the same time.
Ontologi-cal reference	Communities as "entities" definable by a basic separation between "inside" and "outside".	Places as dualities: on the one hand, places co-exist (potentially) at different spatial scales as they are constituted by the practices of different groups. On the other, they retain a given coherence (however shifting), which

Dimension	Community	Place
		makes it possible to be seen as spatially and historically distinctive *places*. The inside/outside boundary is therefore not firm [See the definition of place below]
Epistemo-logical reference	Distinction between internal and external "ways of knowing" (emic vs. etic perspectives)	Knowledge is scalar – the same place can be known in different ways at different scales.
Political relevance	Human experience entirely confined within the horizon of the community	Multiple experiences of place can coexist within a group or even within the same person.

Source: author's interpretation of selected literature

A short definition of place can be formulated as follows: places are socially significant interruptions in the continuity of space-time. Form a sociological point of view, anything is a "place" to the extent to which social actors:

- assign it a name (even if the name can change over time)
- make a symbolic distinction between what it means to be "inside" as opposed to being "outside" the place (and the distinction is meaningful to them)
- establish various exchanges and social interactions between that "inside" and "outside" through flows of matter/ energy or information.

This obviously allows that diverse actors – differentially located in social and spatial structures – might construct the same place in a variety of contradictory ways. Cresswell (2005) cited the geographer Tuan who provided an explanation of space and place that resonates well with the approach taken here:

> What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value.... The ideas 'space' and 'place' require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space

> as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place (Tuan 1977 cited in Cresswell 2005: 8).

Still, I do not wish to quickly embrace a notion of place without first examining its limitations.

Place and its Limitations: The Geographical Perspective

In the history of geographical thinking, the preoccupation with place emerged, at first, from the curiosity of humans which manifests itself in questions such as: 'how are other places compared to our own?' And 'why are there differences between parts of the surface of the Earth' (Cresswell 2005: 16). In the volume entitled *The Problem of Nature: Environment, Culture and European Expansion* David Arnold explains that anthropologists, historians, sociologists and geographers were actively involved in 'meeting the ideological imperatives of a new imperial age' (2003: 29). One of these imperatives was the explanation of *differences* between regions or places, but this new kind of curiosity was a far cry from the ahistorical interest for difference invoked above. In the colonial context, differences were frequently couched in terms of environmental or racial superiority/inferiority (Arnold 2003: 27). The environmental deterministic theories of Ellsworth Huntington or Ellen Semple readily come to mind in this regard. Not so well-known is the fact that, with some notable exceptions, these ideas remained undisputed among many early twentieth century American sociologists[16].

In Britain, the geographers Herbertson (1905) and Fleure (1919) were similarly concerned with distinguishing places or

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[16] For example, Grove Dow wrote in his *Introduction to the Principles of Sociology* (1920) that "...the warm regions never produce the sturdy, ingenious races of people that the colder regions develop. This is one reason why practically all conquering races come from the north, and why a great continent like Africa and an immense territory like India are easily conquered by small European nations" (1920: 26).

regions from each other, on the basis of natural or human attributes: 'In each case the focus was on differentiating one clearly defined region (place) from the next and explaining the logic of the definitions' (Cresswell 2005: 17 – 18).

These understanding of places as regions of the Earth which differed among each other were all premised on a more or less veiled conception of the superiority/inferiority of the groups that inhabited them or of the conditions under which they lived. These ideas proved to be of lasting influence. Even as late as 1952, in a review of Marston Bates' book *Where Winter Never Comes: A Study of Man and Nature in the Tropics*, Robert Platt felt compelled to dispel some of the conceptions which, one would infer, were still common in the mid-twentieth century, at least among the lay public:

> (1) that rain forest is not a jungle of tangled undergrowth but a shady place of fairly open ground under the dense crowns of tall trees; (2) that ways of life in the tropics are not the result of natural environment, nor of racial biology, but have arisen in the wayward course of culture history; (3) that our difficulties and failures in the tropics are due to maladjustment of our middle-latitude occidental tools and practices, not to inherent shortcomings of tropical nature (Platt 1952: 182).

The places with which the modern Western world became concerned were, for the most part, *colonial places*. In other words, they were places set within a specific centre-periphery relationship, a one-dimensional model of interactions between metropolitan and colonial places (Lester and Dussart 2008: 206). The representation of different communities and cultures as occupying distinct places in a discontinuous space has been prevalent in the social sciences for a long time. Gupta and Ferguson (1992) explained this dominant way of seeing the relationships between culture(s) and place(s) as follows:

> The representation of the world as a collection of "countries," as in most world maps, sees it as an inherently fragmented space,

> divided by different colours into diverse national societies, each "rooted" in its proper place (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 6).

If places are the bounded cultural and spatial entities which they are thought to be, their interactions can only take the form suggested by the 'billiard-ball' metaphor. Doreen Massey has coined this phrase to call attention to a tacit assumption that has underlain most scholarly approaches to place for a long time: 'first the differences between places exist, and then those different places come into contact. The differences are the consequence of internal characteristics' (Massey 2005: 68).

With the postmodern turn in the social sciences, it could only be expected that this implicit but fundamental assumption about how the social world is carved up into distinct 'cultures' would come under sustained criticism. Castells (2000), Bauman (2001) and Giddens (1990), to mention only some of the sociological theorists, have all announced the 'erasure' or 'death' of place under conditions of globalization, that is the restructuring of social relationships across ever wider spans of time and space. In geography, Massey argued that Harvey and others writing about time-space compression reject place and the 'spatially located' as reactionary. This can be further traced to Heidegger, for whom space/place is Being and in this sense it is a diversion from the progressive dimension of Time as Becoming (Massey 1995: 63 – 64). This tendency has been discussed earlier in this chapter and will not be taken up here. The important conclusion is that place has been pushed into a conceptual penumbra.

Current Theories of Place and their Critique

As I mentioned in chapter 2, in recent years there has been a renewed interest in bringing place back on the intellectual agenda. Despite this growing interest in the 'local', the return to place has not been accompanied by a parallel effort to develop

adequate theoretical interpretations of place. Most authors seem content with the 'billiard-ball view of place', whereby the main duty of the researcher is to ascertain the 'power of place' in resisting or otherwise delaying or limiting the expansion of capital and space. In fact, many recent discussions of place are written from more or less explicit activist positions engaged in the defence of places and communities. First, it is important to clarify *in what terms* are places defended and affirmed in contemporary discussions of place. Second, one must ask, what are the theoretical implications of this particular vocabulary used in the defence of place? These two steps are important before I can hope to advance my own interpretation of place.

First, the defence of place is justified in terms of its difference, more specifically, of a difference which makes it superior to the exploitative and unsustainable Western models and practices of nature and development. Here is how Gismondi justified why local communities and their struggles should command the attention of scholars interested in environmental and social justice:

> Rooted in territories, ecologically attentive, often with access to democratic institutions, knowledge and practices that predate globalism, local struggles construct strong place-bound "identities", "strategies of localization" and "political ecologies" (Gismondi 2006: 137).

Escobar (2006) similarly argued that places should be seen in terms of economic, ecological and cultural difference. As noted above, such differences assume that the non-Western, non-global models of nature are inherently superior. For example, Goldman (1998) claimed that 'local communities are in the best position to decide for themselves how to manage natural environments' (cited in Johnston 2006: 58)

Emphasizing difference is anything but trivial for the theoreticians of place. What is at stake is no more nor less than a possible blueprint for a better future. In the conclusion to his article entitled 'Culture sits in places' Escobar asked: 'Can the

world be reconceived and reconstructed from the perspective of the multiplicity of place-based practices of culture, nature and economy?' (Escobar 2001: 170). Place thus becomes a basis for constructing a new type of globality, in fact a glocality as many prefer to call it, organized around difference.

Second, place is taken to represent a basic aspect of the experience of large numbers of people, especially in the non-Western world. Escobar notes that, regardless of what theories of globalization say about the erasure of place, '...the fact remains that place continues to be important in the lives of many people, perhaps most' (2001: 140). Furthermore, he argues that 'communities worldwide are increasingly steadfast, adamant and articulate about the defence of their places, environments, and ecosystems' (Escobar 2006: 6). In a nutshell, place is defined as 'the experience of, and from, a particular location with some sense of boundaries, grounds, and links to everyday practices.' (Escobar 2001: 152)

Third, the defence of place is justified by the simple fact that certain places bear within themselves, almost literally, the seeds of their historical and ecological uniqueness. In discussing the Pacific region of Colombia, for example, Escobar contended that 'local communities have been shown to have developed throughout the centuries a sophisticated *local model of nature* that integrates the biophysical, human, and supernatural worlds and that is significantly distinct from modern conceptions' (Escobar 2006: 130; emphasis added). Goodman followed Mathews in discussing 'transnational communities of resistance' which brought together embedded eco-communities (Mathews cited in Goodman 2006: 164). The idea that the uniqueness of place is the basis for its defence was once more underscored by Escobar:

> The crucial importance of this trend for the defence of place as project should become increasingly appreciated. The point in these works is not only to show how longterm habitation and commitment to place are unsettled by larger political economies, but how local groups develop "strategic countermeasure[s] to the deterritorialized space" represented by those forces (Kuletz, 1998:

239). A related, but different angle is taken by Pramod Parajuli, who has developed a substantial and promising conceptualization of place-based grassroots forms of governance based on ecological ethnicities and a simultaneous revitalization of ecology and democracy, and very much in opposition to destructive trans-local forces (Parajuli 1996, 1997) (Escobar 2001: 149).

What are the theoretical implications of this vocabulary employed by some political ecologists in the defence of place? The most important seems to be related to how such views of place and how such arguments for the defence of place can be articulated with extra-local and global spaces. Although political ecologists are interested in underscoring the supra-place effects of place-based politics (Escobar 2001: 142) – usually by invoking concepts such as glocality – their commitment to a certain vocabulary of place may prevent them from developing a nuanced understanding of local – global articulations.

The term glocality has apparently been coined in the late 1980s in relation to processes of capitalist restructuring (Escobar 2001: 156). It refers to 'cultural and spatial configurations that connect places with each other to create regional spaces and regional worlds' (Escobar 2001: 161). Escobar explained that glocality seeks to move beyond the opposition between the local and the global by emphasizing the 'two-way traffic between globalization and localization.' As promising as this idea is in the conceptualization of place, and its articulation with extra-local space, glocality seems to be limited by certain assumptions.

First, the glocal is proposed as a way to restore (some of) the imbalance between the sustained attention given to the global and the rather scant attention paid to the local. The global and the local are thus reified as forces which only need to be brought into a more symmetrical relationship. How these forces can actually be seen as intermingling, in such a way that the very notions of 'local' and 'global' become problematic, is left unexamined. Second, from this view of the local and the global as 'things' which have to be brought into a more balanced relationship, derives another important implication of the notion of glocality: the local remains,

in its relations with the global, essentially unchanged. To be sure, Escobar was well aware that places are under a great deal of pressures aiming to displace lives and livelihoods, but their inner core – place as *difference* – remain unchanged. For example, Escobar manifested an interest only in those 'forms of globalization of the local that could become effective political forces in the defence of place and place-based identities' (Escobar 2001: 156; emphasis added). On the other hand, he glossed over the manifold possibilities in which some aspects of the local are globalized, but not others, or how globalization changes the very meanings of place or place-based identity.

Third, glocalization is seen as a largely progressive force, in which subaltern groups (communities and social movements) 'engage in the production of locality by enacting a politics of scale from below' (Escobar 2001: 161). Thus, glocalization appears as a way of reaffirming the 'voices of the weak' in the confrontation with the global. The possibility that the local could be integrated into counter-glocal projects, in which the global uses local voices to reinforce its discourse, is left unexamined.

The fourth assumption, which is related to the others and ultimately greatly limits the analytical power of the glocality concept, is the continued emphasis on the billiard-ball view of places. Ironically perhaps, Escobar uses Massey (1998) to suggest that different places have to be conceived as a 'genuine plurality' (quote from Massey 1998) in order to 'multiply the geographical speaking positions for a truly spatialized globalization' (Escobar 2001: 165). However, in Escobar's hands, this boils down to the – in my view - uncritical conclusion that 'many cultural politics and political cultures can [continue to] coexist, giving new meaning to democracy' (2001: 168 – 169). The emphasis on existence rather than transformation yields an impoverished image of places as local balls interacting with global cues, each "ball-place" being more or less successful in expressing its own true self. Admittedly, this true self is a complex set of economic, ecological and cultural differences but what seems essential is the fact that they are

'embodied in the practices of the ethnic communities' (Escobar 2003: 165). In contrast, what is needed is a thorough problematization of the local.

Finally, Steven Yearley (2005) addressed the question of how environmental problems come to be labelled 'global'. He analysed the ways in which the 'global' label is attached to certain problems but not to others and what the roles of different actors are in this labelling process. The social construction of global environmental problems has received extensive attention (for a recent brief review see Van der Heijden 2008, Lidskog, Mol and Oosterveer 2015). The questions that are usually glossed over are, however, *how do certain problems come to be local* and *how is the local transformed so that it becomes an arena where problems are constructed*? The problem of the social construction of local problems has been largely ignored. The questions above have, to my knowledge, seldom been asked, presumably because their answer seems too obvious. What *is* a place, what it *stands for* and what it *consists of* are puzzles that can be easily solved by going to that place or reading the accounts of others about that place. Unlike the global, the local can be glimpsed almost at once, especially when it is identified as a community or a landscape. In the anthropological tradition, the local has been approached as a small, bounded entity, the elements of which could be described and explained in terms internal to the place. It is important to problematize the local to the same extent to which the global is problematized, in order to understand the contemporary transformation of places.

Topogenesis: The Multiple Transformations of Place under Globalization

Places and place-making have always existed, if one means by these processes the construction of identities, worldviews, political

communities etc. in relation to one circumscribed geographic area. Escobar's view of place seems to simply take this historical reality and refashion it as a political vehicle for advancing the interests of poor and dispossessed communities. Or, this is at least what the social movements that he discusses – for example the Process of Black Communities in the Pacific area of Colombia – seem to be doing. But what activists do not see, as can only be expected of any social actor deeply involved in a given practice, should not remain obscure to the researcher of social life.

The approach taken here goes one step before political ecology, by problematizing all that is normally taken for granted in writings on the defence of place or place-based modes of thought and practice. The new concept that might help reorient our thinking about place is that of *place making* or *topogenesis*. What is proposed by topogenesis is the question of how the *experience of place is multiply and radically reconstructed under conditions of time-space distantiation and disembedding* (Giddens 1990) or, in general terms, under conditions of globalization. In other words, how are places recreated under conditions of global fluidity. By phrasing the question in this way it is assumed, in agreement with the political ecology approach, that places are not erased or lessened in their socio-cultural and economic significance by the new space of flows (Castells 2000). On the other hand, and in contrast to some prevailing views in political ecology, the importance and vitality of place do not simply reside in the places themselves but in new, multi-layered and dynamic experiences of place.

In what sense are the experiences of place new? In his work, Escobar repeatedly alluded to the 'continued vitality' of place, to the continued importance of place-based modes of consciousness and practice (2001: 141), to the observation that the world 'continues to be local' (not only global) (2006: 121), or that 'place-based practices continue to be important in the politics of many subaltern groups' (2003: 163). Harcourt and Mumtaz similarly contended that place 'continues to be fundamental to people's

daily lives' (2002: 40). The idea of continuity, which crops up repeatedly in the quotations above, suggests that places and communities have retained their social, cultural and ecological uniqueness in spite of all the pressures exerted by extra-local forces (e.g. Johnson 2012). The inner core of place has historically remained true to itself – expressed in the idea of continuity – and set apart from the outside world – hence Escobar's insistence on difference. In contrast to continuity and difference, I propose transformation and novelty as the defining themes of place studies. This is because the process of disembedding is not the end of place but the beginning of multiple processes of place-creation. In this sense, *topogenesis* is opposed to the simple idea of continuity. Even when scholars of place are aware of and even celebrate the political transformation of place, they still return to an image of place as true to itself: 'what is offered [...] is a transformative conception of place that is insistent nevertheless on the necessity of respecting its integrity' (Dirlik 2002: 15).

Why is the experience of place multi-layered? Under the conflicts of globalization, places emerge as something different because they have been disembedded, de-localized, penetrated or revamped by hegemonic forces. This argument does not involve accepting Castells' view that the space of flows is about to conquer the space of places. Rather, it means that we need to explore how the experiences of the same physical place become so differentiated that one can actually conceive of a plurality of places coexisting in what used to be seen as one unambiguous spot on the earth's surface, bearing an unproblematic name. Once *topogenesis* is set in motion, the spot and the name might remain unchanged but their meanings diversify in a thoroughly reflexive process.

What does it mean that places become dynamic? The answer to this question points to the core theoretical argument of the idea of *topogensis*. *Topogenesis*, used here in its literal sense ("the creation of place") only occurs under specific socio-historical circumstances, namely those suggested by the concept of free-floating place (see chapter 5). Loosened from the

unambiguous domination of one production regime, places are ripe for being re-created in the power struggles of different regimes of production. In other words, not all places undergo *topogenesis*, but only those which have experienced a change in their regime of production and have emerged as new targets for global appropriation.

The actual process of *topogenesis* is viewed as the intersection of two experiential processes: one of *experience-distancing* and the other of *experience-nearing*. The distinction between experience-nearness and experience-distance was introduced by Clifford Geertz (1979)[17], in an essay on the construction of anthropological knowledge of the Other. The two concepts are taken here to represent not the relationship between the native's and the researcher's points of view, as Geertz coined the terms, but a rather different and rather general distinction. What is intended is a more adequate and dynamic distinction between the local and the global, the grassroots and the hegemonic, the space of places and the space of flows. Following Relph (1976: 29), I will define place as a 'multi-faceted phenomenon of experience'. The aim of the *topogenetic* approach is to bring to light the unique transformations which places undergo under current conditions of globalization. These transformations fail to be captured by theories of glocalization or defence of place and a more complex and dynamic approach is required. *Topogenesis*, that is the intersection of experience-nearing and experience-distancing processes that re-create place at a variety of scales, is proposed as a new perspective on place-as-experience under conditions of globalization.

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[17] Geertz himself does not define this conceptual pair, but explains the terms as follows: "An experience-near concept is, roughly, one that someone-a patient, a subject, in our case an informant-might himself naturally and effortlessly use to define what he or his fellows see, feel, think, imagine, and so on, and which he would readily understand when similarly applied by others. An experience-distant concept is one that specialists of one sort or another-an analyst, an experimenter, an ethnographer, even a priest or an ideologist- employ to forward their scientific, philosophical, or practical aims" (1979: 57).

The first moment of *topogenesis* occurs with the attempt to appropriate a previously more or less secluded place and to integrate it into a globalized regime of production. This requires distancing, that is, making the place universally understandable and manageable as a global commodity. In other words, it requires making sense of the place in abstract, global terms (money or information) rather than in terms of local idiosyncrasies. In the case of resource extraction, for example, distancing can mean transforming a more or less amorphous valley ecosystem, mountain, or seacoast, by various processes of removing local contingency and emphasizing global utility, into a hydropower project, an open pit mine or an industrial shrimp farm, respectively. In fact, there can be more or less radical forms of distancing; those which involve profound processes of commodification as in the examples given, can be considered as radical forms of experience-distancing.

Experience-distancing is a conflict-ridden process. Those carrying out the initial process of displacing face a number of challenges, two of which are the most important. First, by making the place universally understandable in the form of a new globalized 'commodity' – potentially accessible to a large variety of actors (local and extra-local) – it opens the door for clashes with conflicting interests which seek to appropriate the 'commodity' for other uses on the global stage. Second, working out the experience-distancing process on the local level involves a confrontation with the very socio-historical specificity which is to be removed from the place. This creates a reaction of experience-nearing, engaging local specificities as elements in the universalizing project of transforming the place into a commodity. However, local peculiarities (which can include local voices, local histories and geographies etc.) do not mould themselves automatically into the distancing process and thus can pose unexpected problems for those carrying out the distancing. This can, in turn, require new strategies of distancing and possible shifts in the scales at which the distancing is carried out.

The main characteristics of the two processes of *topogenesis* are summarized below (Table 3.2). Wherein lies the analytical usefulness of experience-nearing and –distancing in comparison with more familiar conceptual pairs of local – global and place – space? First, nearing and distancing presuppose 'movement towards' rather than a fixed state. More appropriately than assuming that a given element of experience is 'near' or 'distant', place-based or flow-derived, the concepts proposed here explain the genesis of place under globalization as a continuous process through which places acquire universality but also particularity, how they are constrained but also liberated, how their links with other places move towards the global but also towards the proximate etc.

Table 3. 2: **Comparison of experience nearing and distancing approaches**

Criteria	Experience-nearing	Experience-distancing
Knowledge & valuation	Concrete, context-dependent knowledge	Universal, abstract knowledge (classification into general categories)
	Context-dependent valuation - "livelihood-driven"	Universal means of valuation (money, regulations, principles) – "principle-driven"
Agency	Generates agency (which can manifest itself in attempts to take advantage of windows of opportunity created by the emerging structures).	Generates structure that can be articulated with similar structures
Interactions	Flexible and negotiable	Rigid
	Punctuated by inconsistencies	Coherent and predictable

Source: author's interpretation and application of Geertz's (1979) distinction

The second useful feature of the approach taken here is that the outcomes of these processes free one's thinking of the notion of place as a "thing" in which identities or practices are rooted or grounded. In other words, the outcomes of topogenesis are a

variety of *iconic places*, that is, images and counter-images of place (Harvey 1995: 23), resulting from different configurations of experience-near and experience-distant elements. Iconic places are the more or less intended results of the struggles between various actors seeking to advance their definition of the experience of place.

The processes by which Roşia Montană was made and unmade as a globalized place will be explored in detail in chapter 5, dealing with its political economy, in chapter 6, exposing various experience-distancing processes, and in chapter 7 on the proliferation of experiencing-nearing endevours. Before that, however, it is important to present in detail how the data was collected and interpreted and, in more importantly, how Roşia Montană acquired sociological meaning for this researcher.

Chapter Four   Methodology and the Experience of the (Mine)field

Before Entering the Field: Early Conjectures

My interest in Roşia Montană was stirred in June 2002 by several articles published in the Romanian daily *Evenimentul Zilei* (*The Daily Event* – henceforth *EVZ*), shortly after I completed my master's thesis in environmental sociology. The titles of the articles which grabbed my attention – e.g. "Stop the Madness in the Apuseni Mountains" (*EVZ* 2002a), "Roşia Montană – a possible ecological disaster" (*EVZ* 2002b) or "Teachers from Baia Mare protest against the Roşia Montană project, asking the prime minister to 'stop the poisoning of souls!'" (*EVZ* 2002c) – signalled the presumed environmental and human risks associated with this planned large-scale mining operation. I initially became interested in one of the most controversial aspects of the project – the displacement and resettlement of part of the local population – and began collecting documents regarding this process, mostly from print and online sources. These included the *Roşia Montană Project Description* (RMGC 2002), the *Resettlement and Relocation Action Plan* (RMGC 2003), and the corporate profile of the project developer (Gabriel Resources)[18]. On the other hand, being aware that the proposed mine had generated disapproval from the local population and activists, I also collected reports released by the opposition to the project, such as *Roşia Montană: Cyanide in a Community: Ecology, Corporate Profit, and the Struggle for People's*

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[18] Available at: www.gabrielresources.com

Rights (Simion and Brand-Jacobsen 2002) or *Roşia Montană gold mine: a future predictable catastrophe* (Bankwatch 2002). These and similar materials provided insights into the initial stages of the relocation of the local population, as it began to unfold in 2002. The events anticipated in the newspapers – the 'largest mine in Europe', several hundred households resettled, cyanide poisoning or dramatic changes in the landscape - were striking for the Romanian public opinion, mostly because they were unprecedented. The resettlement aspects of the case drew my attention, especially because they seemed to receive somewhat less attention in the media than the more visibly contested environmental problems. At that time (2002 – 2003), I was taking an online master's course at Lund University on "Globalisation and Transformation in a Comparative Perspective" and decided to write my thesis on Roşia Montană.

Despite my intellectual eagerness to study the resettlement process at Roşia Montană, and more exactly its "risks", "impacts" and the "foreseeable future" of the relocatees, I had to face a practical problem: the lack of empirical data on the relocation process and its outcomes. Part of the difficulty stemmed from the very nature of the case – relocation was ongoing during the time I carried out my master's research (2002 – 2004) – while the other impediment was due to the lack of any data collected directly in Roşia Montană. Media reports were too idiosyncratic, I thought, with a wide range of perspectives all of which could obviously not be true at the same time. There were journalists who titled their articles in dramatic terms, for example, 'The Moţi [are] on the Brink of War' (Ţurcanu 2002a), 'The torturers from Roşia Montană: The war over gold kills people' (Lupescu 2004), or 'Save the Apuseni Mountains' (*EVZ* 2003), while detailing in their articles the risks to which the local inhabitants and the local ecosystems were exposed. Others suggested or claimed that the relocation was not such a bad deal after all, given the sometimes substantial compensations paid to the owners, with

titles such as 'Overnight Billionaires' [19] (*EVZ* 2002d) or 'At Roşia Montană, a nut tree is sold for 3 million, a hut for 1.5 billion' (Nicolae 2004) praising the unexpected wealth that had befallen the residents of this historic mining town.

As an intellectual and sociologist, moderately animated by a sort of armchair activism, I felt that it was my scholarly duty to develop a critical argument with regard to the Roşia Montană project. At a minimum this was the prevailing attitude in the academic environment in Romania and abroad (Academy of Economic Studies 2003, Ecological University 2003, Haiduc 2003; Cernea 2003; see also Ban and Romanţan, 2008). Animated by this critical spirit and in spite of the lack of data, I decided to take an alternative methodological approach, without being fully aware of its implications.

The international literature on development - forced displacement and resettlement (DFDR) is quite univocal with regard to the outcomes of DFDR processes. If carried out hastily and without proper regulatory enforcement, involuntary displacement almost inevitably ends up impoverishing the project-affected population. This finding was so consistent across a large number of cases that a well-developed analytical model – the Impoverishment Risks and Reconstruction (IRR) model – was proposed to study the different dimensions of impoverishment (Cernea 1990, 1991, 1995, 1996, 1997, 2000; Downing 2002; Cernea and Maldonado 2018). Encouraged by this observation, I used the IRR model as a predictive tool (Cernea 1997) to assess the possible impoverishment risks that could ensue as a result of the relocation of the population from Roşia Montană. In short, I applied the IRR framework to Roşia Montană to assess whether and to what extent the local population could be exposed to one or several impoverishment risks. These included landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, poor nutrition, increased morbidity and mortality,

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[19] This refers to amounts paid to the relocatees from Roşia Montană in Romanian currency (ROL), at an approximate exchange rate of 30,000 lei for 1 USD. One billion lei was the equivalent of 33,000 USD.

marginalization, social disarticulation, and restricted access to common property resources[20] (Alexandrescu 2004). My case yielded mixed results, in the sense that while some residents seemed to be (potentially) affected by the future mine (especially those in the buffer area of the new project), others were likely to be little or not at all affected (e.g. homestead land was allegedly compensated at market value). In fact, lacking data on the actual situation in Roşia Montană, the whole assessment seemed quite artificial as I had no means to ascertain the similarity of Roşia Montană with other cases of DFDR. In a review of the master's thesis in which I analyzed this case (Alexandrescu 2004), two reviewers from Lund University concluded that while the paper had merit, 'one could have wished [...] that empirical detail and description had been more worked out, as it now [stands], the mountain and its inhabitants remain enveloped in mist and fog!'.

This statement expressed an obvious shortcoming of the paper, namely the lack of primary empirical data. This was to be corrected by my entry and subsequent fieldwork carried out in Roşia Montană. On the other hand, it also pointed to a methodological assumption which informed the paper, namely the assumption that prediction can be based on analogy. The logic behind this was outlined long ago by Bertrand de Jouvenel (1967, cited in Colquhoun 1996: 36):

> [P]rediction by analogy presupposes that the mind has defined the present situation well enough to discover analogues for it, judging the resemblance to be fundamental enough for the same sort of events to follow as in the reference-situation.

The problem with this approach was that the situation had not been defined well enough – and this was more than just a lack of data – and that the 'fundamental resemblance' with the reference-situation - that is, with other cases of development-forced displacement and resettlement - was problematic from the

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[20] These are the eight impoverishment risks postulated by the IRR model (see Cernea 1997).

beginning. However, my eagerness to 'predict' what would happen at Roşia Montană drove me to develop a whole paper based on the comfortable conjecture that 'displacement has the same effects everywhere.' My first trip to Roşia Montană helped dispel this uncritical assumption but it also raised more difficult questions about what was actually going on in this mining town.

Entering the Field: One Situation, Many Definitions

There are three theoretical and methodological issues which my use of the IRR model seemed unable to resolve once I entered the field at Roşia Montană. First, the IRR framework assumed the existence of four, generally unproblematic categories of actors involved in DFDR processes, namely: the project developers, the state (frequently in partnership with public or private companies acting as developers), development agencies (international financial institutions) and the local (affected) population. The model is, therefore, not designed to accommodate a much larger variety of actors with different definitions of the situation. Second, the implicit argument of the IRR was that while the developers, in agreement with the state and financiers, *have the decision-making power* with regard to the whole displacement and resettlement process, the locals are relegated to the receiving end of this relationship of subordination (Oliver-Smith 2009) and thus can only *suffer* to a larger or smaller extent the consequences of those decisions. Certainly, the IRR approach does not rule out the possibility of resistance (Cernea 2008), but it tends to relegate the subjectivity and agency of the affected population to a residual category (Dwivedi 2002). Building on the work of Ranjit Dwivedi (1999), some approaches point to the need to understand risks as variable, shaped by cultural norms and policy frameworks and often steeped in uncertainty (Oliver-Smith 2010). Third, by entering the field at Roşia Montană I entered a site 'invested with hierarchies, competing ideologies, and

struggles over resources' so I was almost inevitably 'trapped in networks of power' (Burawoy 1998: 22). Investigating risks directly – especially material risks related to the means of livelihood – was almost impossible due to the power effects of silencing (explained below). In what follows I will address each of the three issues raised above.

First, the actors on the Roşia Montană stage are more varied than the IRR model appears to suggest, and they also have different degrees of visibility. Visibility itself can be conceived from different perspectives as physical visibility, media visibility and social visibility and each of these three forms will be explained in detail below. The degree of visibility is crucial in any effort to understand the different DFDR situations which social actors from Roşia Montană find themselves in and upon which they act. The project developers/mining company had a high degree of physical visibility in Roşia Montană with banners, buildings and cars carrying the logos of GR/RMGC which could be seen in the central areas of Roşia Montană. These included the main road along the Roşia Montană valley and the central square, henceforth *the central axis* of Roşia Montană. The company headquarters and various company-owned buildings were located in the same central areas. Figure 4.1 shows a poster of RMGC which reads: "The truth is stereo. Listen to both sides. [This way] to the information centre of Roşia Montană Gold Corporation".

Figure 4. 1: **Graphic display of the physical visibility of project developer (RMGC) – poster located in the central square of Roşia Montană (2005)**

Source: personal archive of the author.

The company was also highly visible throughout the winding streets of Roşia Montană, where all houses that had been acquired by the mining company bore the sign "Property of Roşia Montană Gold Corporation" (see Figure 4.2).

Local state authorities were, by comparison, less visible, also because, for example, the town hall was located in a building owned by RMGC. The NGO 'Alburnus Maior', which opposed the RMGC project, was somewhat less visible than RMGC (2005-2010) as it was not located in the central square, but about 200 m from it. The poster depicted this differential location of the two information 'sources' (RMGC, identified on the map as 'one source' and Alburnus Maior, identified as 'the other source' or the 'outer source'), albeit in a biased way. The actual location of Alburnus Maior was not as far from the town square as the poster implied.

Figure 4. 2: **House in Roșia Montană, "Property of Roșia Montană Gold Corporation" (blue plaque 2005) and historical monument at the same time (brown plaque).**

Source: personal archive of the author.

Despite the reduced physical visibility of Alburnus Maior, its media visibility was quite high, thanks to Stephanie Roth, the Swiss activist who created a trilingual website (Romanian/ English/Hungarian) on behalf of Alburnus Maior in 2002[21]. From the point of view of internet presence, the visibility of the Alburnus-led opposition was comparable to that of the project developers[22]. The overall media visibility of GR/RMGC in Romania was, however, substantially higher given the two TV/newspaper PR campaigns of the mining company which took place between November 2005 and December 2006 and between May 2009 and the end of 2013.

The physical visibility of the local population varied significantly among the inhabitants of Roşia Montană. It was high in the case of those (relatively few) who posted on the outside walls of their homes the message 'this house is not for sale', in this way publicly expressing their opposition to the RMGC project (see Figure 4.3). It was also high for those who were seen entering the company's headquarters on a daily basis as RMGC employees. At the opposite end, which is that of low visibility, were those residents who lived in several hamlets around the main village of Roşia Montană (e.g. Bălmoşeşti, Iacobeşti, Ignăţeşti, Cărpeniş or Vârtop). They were invisible from a physical point of view due to the distance which separated many of these households from the central axis of Roşia Montană. Their houses were accessible only via unpaved roads, sometimes going over steep slopes. This distance/difficulty of access kept those who visited Roşia Montană oblivious of their existence. I became aware of these residents only during my third and fourth visits to the field (2007) after completing a 10-ten hour long hike down the Roşia Montană

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[21] The website is only in Romanian and English.
[22] Although no quantitative analysis of website hits has been carried out for the two websites, they both have had continued internet presence (at least since 2002) and have been updated regularly. Over time, their addresses have varied to some extent, their most recent urls being: rosiamontana.org and www.rmgc.ro & www.gabrielresources.com (2019).

valley (passing through Bălmoşeşti, Iacobeşti, Ignăţeşti) and up the Vârtop valley (Cărpeniş and Vârtop).

Figure 4. 3: **House along the central axis of Roşia Montană bearing a "This property is not for sale" plaque (2005)**

Source: personal archive of the author.

Between these two extremes of high and low visibility were those residents whose homes were visible along the central axis of Roşia Montană. Their visibility was expressed in a variety of 'shades' of intentionality, from gardens kept in good condition, which suggested that the owners might not be willing to leave Roşia Montană soon, to freshly painted homes, which might have suggested the same intention, or its opposite, namely the eagerness to receive a higher compensation from the company, for a property kept in good condition.

By the third form of visibility, namely social visibility, I mean the perception of different stakeholders with regard to the degree to which *other* stakeholders had a say in the resettlement situation or

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in the project as a whole. It is in terms of this understanding of social visibility that my IRR-inspired expectations were most directly contradicted during my first field visit. This is the second shortcoming that I identified in my application of the IRR model to Roşia Montană – there was no sense of pure victims and all-powerful oppressors (Alexandrescu 2013). The evidence gleaned during my first visit (which was confirmed during subsequent trips) suggested that the relationship of subordination implicitly or explicitly assumed in much of the DFDR literature (e.g. Oliver-Smith 2009) might have been more tenuous at Roşia Montană than in other cases.

From my initial contact with local residents (Mihaela and Horea[23]), but also with some representatives of the project developer (Andrei, a representative of RMGC) and a representative of Alburnus Maior (Simina), the attitudes of the local populations with regard to the project were portrayed in predominantly *voluntarist* terms. There was almost unquestioned – albeit mostly implicit - agreement among these different stakeholders that there were different groups in Roşia Montană: those who opposed and those who supported the RMGC project. Beyond this, there were obvious disagreements between RMGC and AM representatives with regard to the numbers of opponents vs. supporters or their share in the total population. But there was essentially no disagreement over the fact that people *chose* to support or oppose the project, to sell their houses to the mining company or resist the company's offers etc. In other words, local people had a voice and the conjectures made by different stakeholders assumed a more or less democratic stance; for example, statements such as 'less than 1 percent are really against the project' (Horea) or 'Alburnus Maior represents the interests of about 300 – 350 villagers' (Simina) suggested that the politics of numbers of deemed supporters or opponents of the project was important for

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[23] In what follows and throughout the book, I will use gender-appropriate Romanian pseudonyms rather than the real names of the respondents.

both sides. Indeed, as I reflect back on my initial field experience at Roşia Montană and on subsequent visits there, the debate over resettlement was (largely) a struggle over the hearts and minds of the locals. Rather than taking the project or the resettlement process as a given, my (informal) informants[24] mused or argued over their role in the project without being asked or encouraged to do so. My only (explicit) statement about my presence in Roşia Montană was that I am interested in what different stakeholders think about the project.[25] More on my positionality in Roşia Montană can be found in the section on 'entering the minefield', below.

One day after I arrived in Roşia Montană, Mihaela spontaneously claimed that she would leave Roşia Montană if RMGC would give her a house of equivalent size plus 600 – 700 million lei (US$21,500 – 25,000). However, if they did not agree to give her *this level* of compensation, she would stand up against the project and the latter will not be succeed even if she were to stay in Roşia for the rest of her life. Mihaela was not born in Roşia, she explained, and always yearned to leave this place, adding in a raised, half-joking tone that Roşia Montană could well end up in 'dust and ashes', because she never loved this place since she set foot here.

A related shortcoming was that the IRR model focused – as its name suggests – on risks which can accrue as a result of

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[24] I will use the expression "informal informants" or "initial informants" to refer to those individuals who agreed to talk to me on my initial field visit (September 2005). They are informal in the sense that they were not asked, at this initial point in my research, any specific questions but conveyed their views spontaneously in relation to who they thought I was.

[25] More exactly, my introductory speech included the following: I introduced myself as a Ph. D. student in Sociology at U of T. who is interested in the project and what the different stakeholders think about it. In some cases I mentioned that I will visit all of the stakeholders. Also in some cases I mentioned that I am interested in the social and environmental aspects of the project and how these are viewed by the different stakeholders. Lastly, I mentioned that I am in Roşia Montană only for a few days to establish a first contact but I intend to come back and stay for a longer time here, probably next year.

resources being lost in the process of resettlement. Michael Cernea defined risks as "the possibility embedded in a certain course of social action to trigger adverse effects (losses, destruction, functionally counterproductive impacts, deprivation of future generations)" (Cernea 2000: 19). The resources that resettlers were likely to lose could be material (land, houses, and adequate nutrition), social (social networks, social status) or human (skills, practical knowledge). The language of risks thus pointed to a linear and additive logic – the resources of an individual or a household can diminish as a result of resettlement; the more such resources are lost, the higher the level of impoverished of the individual or household will be. Conversely, if some (or all) risks were mitigated by specific countermeasures (for example, land-for-land compensation), the less would be the risk of impoverishment. In the ideal case in which adequate compensation and an additional investment for development were provided, the affected individual and his/her family might end up better off (Cernea 2008).

The first visit in Roşia Montană, however, revealed a variety of 'takes' on the problem of resettlement, which could not be divided up neatly in one or several of the eight categories of risks of the IRR model. Take the problem of joblessness and its proposed corrective, informed by the IRR model, of land-based reestablishment and reemployment (Cernea 1997). Horea, the son of Mihaela and a salt mining engineer in nearby town, asked what would happen to the inhabitants of Roşia Montană without mining? He suggested that most male inhabitants of Roşia Montană had been employed in gold mining and that any alternative future for this place (such as a tourist resort) was unrealistic due to the lack of necessary investments. In asking rhetorically about a future without mining, he also had in mind the imminent closure of the RoşiaMin state-owned mine in Roşia Montană, which occurred one year later (2006). His proposed solution was, therefore, neither the abandonment of the proposed RMGC mining project nor its outright implementation, but an

extension of the project from its proposed version: it should take place over a longer time, not just 10 years, but for something like 40 years. He offered two arguments to support his amendment of the 'RMGC version' (my words) of the continuation of mining: on the one hand, the environmental pollution with cyanide would be reduced, because smaller quantities would be used, while on the other people would have jobs for a longer time, perhaps for a whole generation.

As my subsequent research in Roşia Montană revealed with clarity, unemployment was considered a significant problem in 2005, even before the legal steps for approving the project had been taken. At that time, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), the document based on which the mining project could be considered for approval by the Romanian government, had not yet been submitted to the Ministry of the Environment. In other words, the pre-project situation was viewed by several respondents as having a high-risk potential in terms of joblessness. For example Georgian, an RMGC employee and local resident, claimed that in the absence of the project, Roşia Montană would be abandoned. He averted that the process of depopulation had started as early as the 1950s. Alex, a representative of a pro-mining NGO ["Pro Roşia Montană"], which supported the RMGC investment, similarly claimed that Roşia Montană would perish, the youth will leave, and the old people will pass away. Another informal respondent, Marcel (former mining technician) said that the state-owned company would cease all activity in 2006 and that afterwards 'the area would become deserted, stripped of what is most beautiful in nature'. From his latter statement it is not clear whether this bleak future was due to the end of state mining in Roşia Montană or would rather be the result of the large-scale project proposed by RMGC. Marcel added that the arrival of this investor will extend the exploitation of this area by 15 – 20 years, while Horea (above), was concerned that it will only last for 10 years. In short, if the future of Roşia Montană without the RMGC project looked problematic to some employees

and supporters of the company, others saw the prospect of a relatively short-term investment as equally troublesome.

What about land-for-land compensation? Most of my initial informants seemed unconcerned about this widely prescribed policy measure encouraged, among others, by the World Bank via its operational policy 4.12[26]. The question of the agricultural use of the land proved to be, even on my first visit, a deeply contested issue among different stakeholders. Mihaela, Georgian and Andrei, the first two long-term residents of Roşia Montană, the latter a non-local RMGC employee, claimed that practicing agriculture is next to impossible in Roşia Montană due to poor soils and a harsh climate. On the other hand, Simina, a non-local activist with Alburnus Maior, maintained that her organization wanted to propose alternative development projects based on agriculture and milk-processing. She cited the example of Dorin, a former mining engineer-turned-farmer who lived off agriculture at that time (2005-2007).

My personal observations in Roşia Montană during the first visit covered a wide variety of situations, from residents who kep two or three cows or had a small vegetable garden to households which lacked any significant garden space and/or place to keep domestic animals. The risk of impoverishment due to the lack of land-based employment was, thus, highly variable among different residents.

In conclusion, joblessness was not simply an expected effect of the mining project but a problem that plagued Roşia Montană *over and above* the relocation process itself. If the RMGC project were to proceed, this problem would have been solved, at least in part, though some residents were concerned that it will be for an unacceptably short term. If the project would be cancelled, joblessness would be a potentially worsening problem for those remaining in Roşia Montană, due to the lack of alternative tourist

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[26] See World Bank website: http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/ PROJECTS/EXTPOLICIES/EXTOPMANUAL/0,,contentMDK:20064610~menuPK: 4564185~pagePK:64709096~piPK:64709108~theSitePK:502184,00.html

investments and the imminent cessation of all mining activities. Even land-for-land compensation would only benefit those households which relied on farming, but not those (still) relying on mining employment. In short, risks could not be precisely delimited but revealed themselves as complex constructs intertwined with other historical factors in the social and economic fabric of local life.

To conclude, the analytical neatness of the IRR model was not mirrored in the Roşia Montană case. The precise separation between risk categories could not be achieved and the problem was further compounded by the lack of a unitary standard of risk evaluation by different stakeholders. Neither was it possible to distinguish a pre-project situation from the changes introduced by the project as all were part of an ongoing flow of broader or narrower processes of change.

The third blind-spot of my application of the IRR model was its relative inattention to questions of power. It is usually assumed that risks are transparent categories that can be investigated scientifically and are accessible to scrutiny. However, my first visit to the field showed that once I set foot in Roşia Montană I was liable to be 'read' in different ways by my potential respondents, as either '[siding] with the company' or 'being against it'. Asking questions about what local residents have or stand to lose (in terms of income or properties) might have been quickly interpreted as taking the role of the company's property assessors, locally known as 'negotiators'. Most people were very sensitive to any questions concerning the value of their properties.

From an epistemological point of view, the entry into the field helped me shift the focus from narrowly defined risks to the broader category of stakeholders' agency in the face of the risks (and opportunities) brought about by the project. Rather than assessing risks, it seemed more interesting, and theoretically apposite, to focus on the diversity of agentic processes in which locals and non-locals engaged incessantly, thereby constructing and reconstructing their place. A detailed discussion of the interview questions which

were meant to elicit this diversity is presented in the section entitled 'Applying the research instruments'.

In truth to the IRR model, I should note that the applicability of a given framework should not be sought in any mechanical fashion. The fact that the IRR model did not seem to fit in the case of Roșia Montană at the individual level does not reduce the usefulness of the model in general. In the case under discussion, the agency of the locals took its toll on the life of the community as a whole. One dimension of the IRR model, which will not be explored in this work but is highly relevant for what has happened at Roșia Montană, is that of social disarticulation. This refers to the conflict between individual and collective wellbeing which sharpened over the years at Roșia Montană (see Alexandrescu 2013).

Entering the (Mine)field: The Politics of the Project

Michael Burawoy cautioned that the entry into the field 'is often a prolonged and surreptitious power struggle between the intrusive outsider and the resisting insider.' (1998: 22) . The Roșia Montană conflict has similarly been described as a field of polemical social representations (Pop, 2008, 2014). My entry into the Roșia Montană field was certainly shaped by relationships of power, as detailed below. James Clifford (2004: 6) discussed the 'unfinished colonial entanglements of anthropology and Native communities' in relation to Native communities in Alaska. In a more radical tone, Native scholar Haunani-Kay Trask directed her critique at anthropologists who are a part of 'the colonizing horde, because they seek to take away from us the power to define who and what we are, and how we should behave politically and culturally' (Trask 1991: 162). No such cultural barriers – linked to the history of anthropological 'involvement in empire as a geographical project' (Arnold 1996: 30) – applied to the case *I was researching*

at Roşia Montană. As a native of Romania, there was no need to bridge gaps of race, nationality or language, although there were other cleavages, especially those related to class, occupation and region, that surfaced with clarity in my interactions with the inhabitants of Roşia Montană and with the other actors meeting in this place. Not being a 'foreigne' proved to be a definite advantage in gaining access to a population which had occasionally manifested its distrust to foreigners, especially Hungarians, who are known locally as opponents of the mining project (Szombati 2007). Mihaela and Horea, my hosts during my first field visit, questioned at one point the intents of a Swiss activist or of two French researchers who came to Roşia Montană in 2002 and 2004 – 2005, respectively. A professor from the German Mining Museum in Bochum visited Roşia Montană in 2002 and he also had the impression that 'for foreign researchers it is somewhat difficult [to carry out research] since the population does not always welcome such visitors' (personal communication, January 5, 2006) [27]. As I was fluent in Romanian, I also did not have to contend with the linguistic barrier and skirted the problems associated with the use of an interpreter (Borchgrevink 2003).

Burawoy (1998) discussed four effects of power which manifest themselves in ethnographic research, namely domination, silencing, objectification, and normalization. These are discussed at length in what follows. Domination can go both ways in that the researcher can be dominating or be dominated in the ethnographic interaction. In my case, the problem of my domination over respondents was, in my judgment, of limited import, given that the power differential stemmed only from my 'new middle-class' status (with higher cultural and social capital) than many of my respondents. On the other hand, due to the large compensations paid by RMGC for residents' properties, as

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[27] Media accounts suggest that local police forces were advising residents not to talk to foreigners. On the other hand, police officers tried to intimidate foreign journalists and activists who, they claimed, portrayed the company in negative terms (*Evz* 2002b).

well as the income streams generated by growing numbers of visitors and activists to the Roşia Montană area, the income/ wealth differences between me and my respondents were, in general, small or non-existent (in many cases negative).

Shortly after my first field visit, I wrote down my first overall impressions regarding the experience of entry. My expectation was that I would be entering an uneven and conflict-ridden minefield with strong and relatively inflexible supporters and opponents of the mining project. Seen from the outside, the field appeared to be uneven as the company and its supporters were the more powerful actors[28]. I also expected at least some apprehension and questioning of my intentions in Roşia Montană, summarized in the questions 'which side are you on?' or 'are you for or against [the project]?'

The first impression was not borne out to any significant extent during my initial visit. In fact, the very circumstances of my contact with the people in Roşia Montană enabled a smooth entry into the field. In April 2005 I attended a small anti-RMGC rally in downtown Toronto which took place during the annual general meeting of Gabriel Resources. There I met a Romanian woman (Silvia) who was the niece of a resident of Roşia Montană (Mihaela). After telling her about my plans to carry out research in Roşia Montană, I met Silvia again in Bucharest several months later. She suggested that I could find accommodation at her aunt Mihaela, who owned a house not far from the central square of Roşia Montană. At the same time, she introduced me to the setting I was about to enter by saying that things there were much more peaceful than they seemed. She further suggested that I should talk to both opponents and supporters of the project although she was a declared opponent of the mine. Based on this latter fact, my

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[28] Some newspaper titles convey the prevailing mood of the early years of the Roşia Montană controversy (2002 – 2003): "Overt intimidations at Roşia Montană" (Evz July 12, 2003), "The war over gold draws to a close (silence and fear)" (*Formula As*, June 16 – 22, 2003), "Gold Corporation uses diabolic measures to make the *moţi* surrender" (*Formula As*, July 7 – 13, 2003).

position in Roșia Montană could have been easily interpreted as that of a 'project opponent' if Mihaela, her aunt, would have also been an outspoken adversary of the RMGC project. This, however, was not the case. Moreover, between 2002 and 2007 she hosted an RMGC director, a circumstance which lent support to the impression of peacefulness in Roșia Montană. Indeed, once I got there, the situation looked relatively calm. The only visible sign that 'something was going on' were the company pick-up trucks – a fairly unusual car in Romania - which constantly wandered the village uphill and downhill along the central axis. On my first visit, an RMGC employee suggested, in a way paralleling Silvia's temporarily assumed equidistance, that my information should come from two sources, namely the supporters of Gabriel Resources and from its opponents, Alburnus Maior. However, beyond this apparently democratic surface, my presence in the field did raise questions concerning my identity and interests there.

In this sense, my entry into the field meant stepping into a minefield. I was not physically threatened at any point throughout my fieldwork. But there were a number of more or less tense moments which revealed problems of dominating and being dominated in the field. Being the tenant of Mihaela offered me a rather equivocal position between the two sides in the conflict. For her own pragmatic purposes, Mihaela suggested that I should introduce myself as her 'nephew' – which I did in most circumstances. Most of my informants reacted in a neutral-to-slightly positive way to this way of introducing myself, and none of them rejected a dialogue with me based on this affirmed identity. Mihaela's late husband, Cezar, was a mining sector chief[29] and saying that I was the 'nephew of Ms. Cezar' offered a good introduction, especially to former (retired) miners.

In general, my statement that I was a neutral, scientific observer and that the University of Toronto, although located in

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[29] In Romanian "șef de sector". The state-owned enterprise RoșiaMin consisted of 5 mining sectors.

Canada, had nothing to do with Toronto-based Gabriel Resources was enough to assuage most of the initial apprehensions. The first explicit question 'which side are you on?' came from two female residents whom I met at the public library of Roşia Montană (2005). One was a library staff member and the other an elementary school teacher. After several questions and after explaining my 'innocent curiosity', they were willing to talk to me. Two years on, in 2007, Mihaela herself expressed her view that I work (covertly) for the mining company. Some other residents, which had become my informants in the meantime (2005-2007) thought likewise. The wife of a sympathetic key informant, who was a staunch opponent of the mine (Adrian), called me jokingly 'the spectacled cobra', in ironic reference to my glasses. After completing a structured interview in 2007, her father (Stefan), said that he thinks I work for RMGC because of a number of trust questions which I asked. Another informant and the local leader of Alburnus Maior said with reference to my repeated visits to the same respondents that only company negotiators – those RMGC employees in charge of negotiating compensation packages with individual Roşia Montană house- and landowners – return to people's doors. However, in general, there was a sense of acceptance of me being present in Roşia Montană and talking to both sides involved in the conflict, also probably because I mentioned from the beginning that I want to talk to 'all sides'. After all, my host in Roşia Montană offered accommodation to several people working for RMGC (archaeologists, water chemists etc.) but also to her anti-mining niece. In this sense, I could have counted, in her eyes, as just another such tenant; she wasn't troubled at all by my presence. In fact, she was quite helpful with providing information and leads to approach other informants. My assumed dominant position as 'RMGC supporter/employee' did not lead to any rejections and probably distorted respondents' views only to a limited extent. When they wanted to criticize the company, these respondents did not shy away from using strong

words. For example, in my presence, Stefan named the company's CEO (Alan Hill) a 'killer'. Alan Hill had worked for Barrick Gold before coming to GR and was in charge of bringing into production the Bulyanhulu mining project in Tanzania (Gabriel Resources 2005). Barrick had bought the Bulyanhulu mine from Sutton Resources, a Canadian company, in 1999. The story that follows was controversial. Sutton was involved in the alleged killing of 50 Tanzanian miners who were buried alive in the pits, as the company's bulldozers tried to seal the pits to prevent the miners from occupying them. Sutton and Barrick denied the accusations, but many questions remained unanswered (Thomas 2002: 10). The association of GR's CEO with the Tanzanian killings might have been fortuitous, but it suggested that respondents were not disheartened by my assumed corporate-based dominant position and thus withhold their stronger views.

In contrast, when company supporters questioned me or identified me with the project opposition, this was usually done in less friendly terms. Three company representatives asked me from the beginning for a letter of reference from the University of Toronto, two of them in a relatively unfriendly way (2005). Upon my second visit, in 2006, I provided them with the required letter, and they did not inquire any further. However, in May 2007 and June 2007, there were two episodes in which company supporters tried to intimidate me and three research assistants with whom I carried out part of the data collection. The first occurred when I was taking some pictures of several allegedly illegal buildings which had been erected by a local businessman and chair of a pro-mining NGO [Pro Dreptatea]. I thought I was on a public road, when two young men approached me and asked why I was taking pictures on private property. Their unfriendly attitude diminished as I explained that I was not with Greenpeace and, as it turned out, I had interviewed the father of one of these men in the Archaeology department of RMGC a few months earlier. They only asked me to delete the pictures taken (without taking the camera from my hands). The second episode

occurred several weeks later, during a tense moment taking place in the central square of Roşia Montană. On June 30, 2007, there were two rallies – one for and the other against the project – taking place at about the same time. The latter was occasioned by the opening of an alternative 'information centre' (in addition to the one of RMGC), jointly supported by the Soros Foundation and the Romanian Academy. The former rally was dedicated to a celebration of mining traditions in Roşia Montană. The same young man and his father called me and my three assistants, 'greens' and questioned our presence in Roşia Montană. At some point I lost my temper and threatened that if they do not leave us alone, I will create problems for the company back in Canada (which I obviously did not intend to do). They left us alone and the only inconvenience was a slight feeling of insecurity which persisted over the next two weeks. Overall, the feeling of being dominated in the mostly covert conflict from Roşia Montană was stronger than that of my own domination over my respondents.

Silencing, the second form of power in the relationship between researcher and informants is more insidious than simple domination. It refers to the unarticulated fear that what one may say or imply in a discussion with an outsider – especially in relation to the more powerful actors on the Roşia Montană stage – may be somehow used against their interests. Szombati (2007: 33) credited the company with the capacity to create 'an emotionally charged, personal bond to its "stakeholders"' in which fear and hope become intertwined. While agreeing with this argument to a limited extent – because my interest focuses on the ways in which actors repeatedly 'break free' from the affective shackles of the "Hegemon" (Szombati's term) – it is important to recognize that RMGC managed to impose a climate of suspicion in Roşia Montană. For this reason, any detailed questions about material possessions or employment circumstances, which would have been necessary in assessing IRR's eight impoverishment risks, could have been met with disbelief by my respondents ('are you, in fact, a negotiator?') and

effectively *silence* them. For the same reason, I also refrained from asking for their signature on the informed consent letter required by the University of Toronto.

The third and fourth effects of power, objectification and normalization, operate at a more abstract level and relate to the ways in which researchers conceptualize and communicate the results of their research. They will not be addressed in this volume.

The Selection of Respondents

During my pre-entry discussion with Silvia in August 2005, she provided me with a list of potential informants which could introduce me to 'stakeholders' views of the project' (my early definition of the research problem):

1) Mihaela - her aunt, who became my host in Roşia Montană;
2) George - second degree uncle, the cousin of her father), declared anti-mining resident;
3) The new residents of Miceşti - those who received compensation from RMGC and acquired new homes in a village adjacent to the city of Alba Iulia;
4) The guide of the mining museum - employee of Minvest, the state-owned company still active in 2005;
5) Cezara - extra-local activist;
6) Dorin - the 'farmer', former mining engineer;
7) The mayor of Roşia Montană;
8) Franc and Bogdan – activists of Alburnus Maior;
9) Timothy - employee of the Environment department of RMGC;
10) 'La Bombă' - the local pub;
11) Alexandru - the chair of Pro Roşia Montană (pro-mining NGO).

This variety of stakeholders, variously located in relation to the project (*for, against* or *obliquely*[30] *for* or *against*) was quite

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[30] The word oblique is a short-hand for situational motivations to take a specific stance in relation to the mining project.

remarkable since it came from a declared opponent of the mining project. Even to an active opponent of the project, things could not be unproblematically sorted out in a straightforward way. This suggested that the stakes were highly variable and could (indeed should) be taken into account in comprehending the complex picture of actors' views. Silvia implied that even the relocatees (now living in Miceşti) or the mining guide (still a state employee) could have something to contribute to the ongoing debate over Roşia Montană. In more or less conscious ways, it shaped my approach to the selection of respondents. In theoretical terms, my selection of respondents followed the three criteria of visibility: social, physical, and media.

The single most important criterion used in the selection of respondents was that of social visibility, which was based on the assumption that virtually any resident of Roşia Montană as well as the different actors which 'set up shop' in Roşia and became involved in the struggle had a say *and* a unique point of view on what had been going on since the arrival of RMGC, and before. Because the mining company could not mobilize the eminent domain prerogative of the state – that is the right to expropriate owners for a project of 'public interest' – any resident could refuse to sell and, as a result, potentially delay or cancel the planned mining project. The other actors which came from outside and acquired properties or became otherwise involved in local affairs could similarly lay claim to the future of the project. Furthermore, despite the obvious economic dimension of the acquisition program of the company, the circumstances (personal and social) in which different residents found themselves were likely to be quite diverse and their reactions and actions equally varied.

From the first visit it was apparent that, judged simply from a physical point of view, people's properties were immensely varied, from small apartments in socialist-era apartment buildings to large houses with tens of hectares of land. In addition, depending on the position of residents in the different areas of the project –

the historically protected area, the industrial area (project footprint), the buffer area or the outside area of the project – I assumed that residents would hold specific views with regard to their relocation and the fate of the project in general. The residents themselves, whom I met during my first visit, pointed to internal differences within Roşia Montană, in terms of the propensity to accept relocation or not. The first criterion thus suggestsed that it is necessary to cast as wide a net as possible in order to understand a variety of agentic processes in which local actors (resident and 'foreign' alike) are likely to engage. Based on this, the main groups of actors can be distinguished as follows:

- The mining company (GR) and its Romanian subsidiary (RMGC), the NGOs supporting the project (Pro Roşia Montană ["For Roşia Montană"], Pro Dreptatea ["For Justice"], Sindicatul Viitorul Mineritului ["The Union for the Future of Mining"])
- Alburnus Maior, the Soros Foundation Roşia Montană (now Cultural Foundation Roşia Montană), the Romanian Academy
- The state authorities in Roşia Montană (village council, mayor's office, state-owned enterprise RoşiaMin)
- The population living in Roşia Montană and its environs

This is a very crude distinction among the main stakeholder groups – in fact, each of these groups is a congeries of actors. In order to identify more accurately the positions taken by individual actors in addition to those adopted by organizations, and the possible dynamic of these positions, I used the other two criteria, of physical and media visibility. At the same time, to make the analysis more thoroughgoing even if less comprehensive, only the two main actors – the mining company (GR) and the opposing NGO (AM) - will be discussed in depth.

The physical visibility of actors was important not only because the outsider would experience their existence and positions based on what she would see and learn while travelling

to Roşia Montană. The physical visibility of stakeholders was important given that it was linked to the topography of Roşia Montană. What I called the "central axis" consisted of the main road winding its way up the Roşia Montană valley and the central square and the streets radiating from it. The central axis bore the unmistakable symbols of Roşia Montană's mining past (e.g. "hammer and pick" epigraphs on the houses), albeit with different pregnancy between the lower and the upper marketplace (see Slotta and Wollmann 2002: 221 – 255). Houses in other areas of the commune had a more ambiguous identity. At the same time, the central axis was the most urban part of Roşia Montană, which might have concealed for the untrained eye the historical agricultural uses of the land within Roşia Montană (Pop 2002). The types of homes of different residents – e.g. 1960s apartment buildings or historical miners' houses – and their one- or multi-generational relationships to the properties owned were also important factors in accounting for differences in visibility. In this sense, residents living in different parts of Roşia Montană – distinguishable by their visual and structural appearance – would tell different stories than if one would assume that the topography were homogenous. The physical visibility of actors – whether high or low – offered a valuable tool for identifying what in a political ecological context might be called 'subaltern' identities or practices.

Finally, the media visibility of different actors was important to understand the positions adopted by some actors as well as the changing alliances which linked actors both locally and beyond the administratively defined space of Roşia Montană. As with the physical visibility of actors, it was important to analyze both those with high and with low media visibility. It might have been tempting to assume that the actors with high media exposure, RMGC and GR for example, were the 'movers and shakers' of local politics in Roşia Montană, but this view was an oversimplification. The process of establishing local and extra-local alliances had altered both the visibility of what were

previously eminently 'local' actors and their stakes in the conflict over Roşia Montană. Media visibility was, in principle, a quantifiable factor, as one can record the number of hits returned by a search engine in a specific media outlet (e.g. the Romanian daily *Evenimentul Zilei*) or on Google).

The intersection of the two criteria of visibility led to a more detailed classification of the actors included in the analysis (see Table 4.1). All actors had a say in the complex unfolding of the conflict over Roşia Montană, even if some had higher visibility than others. In some cases, visibility was linked to the level of power (defined, in Weber's sense, as the ability to impose one's will even against the resistance of others) yielded by different groups of actors. However, due to the contingent nature of the conflict, it was unjustified to take the higher visibility of some actors as a sign of their inherent superiority in shaping the final outcome of the conflict. For this reason, the main empirical contribution of the book is to emphasize the positions and agency of the actors who have a lower social and physical visibility.

Table 4. 1: **Overview of actors included in the analysis, classified in terms of physical and media visibility (2005 – 2010).**

Physical visibility	Media visibility			
	High		Low	
	Actors	Data collection	Actors	Data collection
High	*Organizations:* GR / RMGC	Document analysis (press releases, annual reports, media accounts)	*Organizations:* Orthodox church	N/A
	Pro Roşia Montană (NGO)		Roman-Catholic church	
			Unitarian Church	
	Viitorul Mineritului (NGO)		Greek-Catholic Church	
			Pentecostal Church	
	Alburnus Maior (NGO)		Baptist Church	
	Soros Foundation Roşia Montană (Cultural Foundation Roşia Montană)		Reformed Church	
	RoşiaMin (state-owned mining enterprise)			
	Individuals: Cornelia (Gabriel Resources)	In-depth interview (02.2007)	*Individuals:* Codrin, Cristofor (RMGC)	Observation public meeting (12.2007)
	Alex (Pro Roşia Montană)	In-depth interviews (10.2006 & 10.2007)	Georgian, Alin, Anca, Paula (RMGC)	In-depth interviews (10.2006 & 10.2007 02.2008)
	Adrian, Iulian (Cultural Foundation Roşia Montană)	In-depth interviews (10.2006 & 10.2007)	Mini focus-group with Sorana, Raluca and Miruna (RMGC)	[Ad hoc] Focus-group interview (02.2008)

Physical visibility	Media visibility			
	High		Low	
	Bogdan (owner)	In-depth interview (09.2008)	Luca (Pro Dreptatea)	In-depth interview (10.2006)
	Dorin, Cezara, Sandu (Alburnus Maior)	In-depth interview (10.2006, 09 10.2007 & 02.2008)	Matei (Pro Dreptatea)	In-depth interview (10.2007)
	N/A	N/A	Ioan (Greek Catholic)	Informal interview (02.2008)
Low	*Organizations:* Pro Dreptatea (NGO)		*Organizations N/A*	N/A
	Romanian Academy	N/A	*Individuals* - Residents of Roşia Montană commune, of Abrud and Câmpeni towns, and of Bucium commune	77 Structured interviews (07.2007 & 05.2008)
	Individuals: CEO and GR board members	Quotes in press releases or interviews	Newly relocated individuals from Roşia Montană to Abrud, Câmpeni, Miceşti/Alba Iulia	13 structured interviews (07.2007 & 05.2008)
	Filmmaker Phelim McAleer	Documentary: *Mine Your Own Business* (2006)	N/A	N/A
	Filmmaker Tibor Kocsis	Documentary: *New Eldorado* (2004)	N/A	N/A

Source: author's synthesis of field records and documentary information

Applying the Research Instruments

Different disciplines define ethnographic research – at least in terms of the length of stay in the field – quite differently. My own stay into the field of Roşia Montană added up to three months over the course of four years (2005 – 2008) (for details, see Table 4.2). Apart from the first five-day research stay (September 2005), during which I became broadly familiar with the setting and ascertained people's willingness to talk to me about their lives and about the project, during the subsequent stays I carried out 116 structured and in-depth interviews (90 structured and 26 in-depth interviews) with 110 different respondents, some of which were interviewed more than once.

By structured interview I mean a list of pre-defined questions with open answers, which was meant to be carried out in a shorter timeframe than an in-depth interview (40 – 50 minutes) and be applied to a larger number of respondents (N = 89), scattered geographically over the following villages/hamlets and towns: Roşia Montană – centre village, Corna, Bunta, Gura Cornii, Bălmoşeşti, Ignăţeşti, Iacobeşti, Gura Roşiei, Cărpeniş, Vârtop, Bucium-sat, Abrud, Câmpeni, Miceşti/Alba Iulia. The structured interviews were carried out in May 2007 (8), July 2007 (67) and May 2008 (15)[31]. The interviews in May 2007 followed a preliminary interview schedule, which was subsequently revised and applied in modified form in July 2007 and May 2008 (full details below). The 67 interviews carried out in July 2007 were applied with the help of three sociology students from the University of Bucharest, namely Monica Costache, Miriam Cihodariu and Cosmin Stancu.

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[31] The total number of interviews is 90, while the number of respondents is 89 because one respondent answered both the preliminary and the final version of the interview.

Table 4. 2: **Break-down of research stays in Roşia Montană (2005 – 2008)**

Time spent in the field	Number of days
September 2005	5
October 2006	6
May 2007	14
June 2007	4
June - July 2007	13
September - October 2007	16
December 2007	4
February 2008	12
May 2008	10
September 2008	6
Total no. of days	90

Source: Author's field research records

Rather than identifying my research as a full-fledged ethnography, it could be characterized, in less strict terms, as 'ethnographically informed'. According to the Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Sociology, 'the term [ethnography] is used in a much looser way within sociology today, to refer to studies that rely on participant observation and/or in-depth, relatively unstructured interviews.' (Hammersley 2007). In fact, my research fit with all the features of ethnography discussed in this *Encyclopaedia*[32]:

- 'People's actions and accounts are studied primarily in everyday contexts rather than under conditions created by the researcher'. My research took place 'in the field', in private homes or public spaces, under conditions over which I had only very limited control.
- 'Data are gathered from a range of sources, including documentary evidence, but participant observation and/or relatively informal conversations are usually the main ones'. This feature applied in my case as well,

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[32] Given that the online version of the "Ethnography" article from the *Encyclopaedia* was used, no page references can be given.

although with the qualification of having done less observation and a larger number of formal interviews.

- 'Data collection is "unstructured" in the sense that it does not involve following through a fixed and detailed research design set up at the beginning'. This characteristic was also true of my research. Even the structured interviews left respondents considerable freedom to provide succinct but open-ended responses or delve on specific questions. The length of the interviews ranged from 30 minutes to over 2 hours. The questions themselves were very general and allowed for unconstrained responses.

- 'The focus is usually on a small number of cases, perhaps a single setting or group of people, typically small scale, with these being studied in depth'. This applies only to some extent as I carried out interviews in Roșia Montană but also up to 70 km away in Alba Iulia. This would not count as multi-sited ethnography either, but I think this geographic sampling offered a relatively grounded insight into the processes taking place at Roșia Montană and in its surroundings.

- 'The analysis of the data involves interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions and how these are implicated in local and wider contexts. What are produced, for the most part, are verbal descriptions, explanations, and theories; quantification and statistical analysis play a subordinate role at most'. Contextualized explanations drawn from my research experience but also from secondary sources will be used at length in the remaining chapters (six and seven).

The main topics covered in the structured interview schedule, in its final form, are outlined below. They started out from a general level probing the context of everyday life at Roșia Montană and moved progressively towards the conflict surrounding the RMGC project.

I. The context of life in Roşia Montană

How did the people (from Roşia Montană and surroundings) described their lives (individually and collectively)? How did they talk about their current lives in comparison to those of other times (past/future) and places (other communities)? One question in particular asked about residents' opinion with regard to what is the most important thing about Roşia Montană that an outsider eager to learn about this place should know.

II. The risks and challenges of life in Roşia Montană

These questions dealt with what unsettles the residents of Roşia Montană and with what 'the problem' at Roşia Montană might be. These questions assumed that residents probably experienced some level of uncertainty and stress in their lives, but the researcher did not suggest what the source of the stress might be and left it up to the interviewees to define it.

III. Roşia Montană and the proposed RMGC mining project

This group of questions inquired about the place of the mining company and its proposed project in the collective and individual history of Roşia Montană.

IV. The possible risks of the Roşia Montană mining project

These questions asked respondents explicitly about the environmental risks of the proposed project as well as about their trust in experts (in terms of available knowledge of risks and, implicitly, about the professional probity of risk experts).

V. Exploring the local reflection of extra-local constructions of the future

Respondents were presented with two sets of predefined scenarios about the probable and the desired futures of Roşia Montană. These scenarios (10 statements for each probable and desired future) were drawn from public statements made by RMGC and the NGOs opposing the project (5 in each of the

probable and desired futures). Although useful in itself, these questions could have been more usefully applied in an in-depth interview because respondents tended to answer and comment only briefly on each of the pre-defined scenarios.

VI. Who will (and should) decide the fate of the project?

These questions aimed to find out who, in the eyes of the respondent, has the legitimate power to decide about the RMGC project. It also left room for 'supernatural' interpretations of the fate of Roşia Montană.

VII. Trust in people and institutions – both local and extra-local

This section included a list of names and institutions for which respondents were asked to rate their level of trust (from 1 – "very much" to 5 – "very little").

VIII. Socio-economic data

This section included questions on the geographic proximity of the respondent to the project (whether in the project-affected area, outside of it or in the blurry "in-between" areas) as well as (cautious) questions about the perceived monetary value of the respondents' properties.

The in-depth interviews were used to elicit more elaborate responses on the past and future of Roşia Montană, but they also asked the respondents to comment on specific events (e.g. the decision of RMGC to lay off part of its workforce in December 2007). In the case of representatives of organizations or other media-visible stakeholders, I included questions about their current activities and cooperation with other organizations.

In questions related to the past, I asked about the family history of the respondent (regardless whether he or she was born in Roşia Montană or not) and about the state of nature/ landscape in the past as well as about the effects of previous economic activities on the landscape. Questions on historical economic and environmental risks were also included.

The questions dealing with the future asked about how the respondent envisions this place ten years from now. I also inquired about the future state of the environment/landscape at Roşia Montană and the perceived need to restore it.

The in-depth interviews offered respondents the freedom to formulate their concerns or visions in elaborate terms. The questions about the past and those about the future were both meant to provide an indirect entry point for a discussion of the current conflict over Roşia Montană – but this did not happen in all cases. These interviews also allowed respondents to revel in their favourite stories or points of view.

In carrying out these interviews, I did not strive to achieve the informational saturation of a given set of conceptual categories. In accounting for incessantly changing forms of agency and place transformation, as they were taking place between 2005 and 2008, the idea of saturation appeared counterproductive. The aim was, indeed, to probe the interview material for possible, emerging meanings and not limit it to theoretically predefined analytical categories.

The documentary sources used in the analysis included national newspapers from Romania (such as *Evenimentul Zilei, Adevărul, România Liberă*) and weekly magazines, such as *Formula As*. This latter source offered the most extensive and in-depth media coverage of the Roşia Montană case. The journalists of Formula As have published no less than 436 articles, opinion pieces or letters on Roşia Montană between February 2002 and May 2011, which means an average of about four articles per month.

Because the questions in the interviews dealt primarily with the place called Roşia Montană – in its various aspects, both individual and collective – the 'objects' in terms of which actors think, plan or carry out their actions needed to be specified. Borrowing, for practical purposes, from Ted Relph's (1976) phenomenological analysis of place experiences, I classified the relevant aspects of agency in terms of the following categories.

- Location – where (i.e. in relation to what geographical or historical frames of reference) did different actors place Roşia Montană and their actions? How did Roşia Montană become differently located in terms of the local/extra-local linkages established by actors? And, conversely, how were such linkages destabilized or re-established in relation to location?

- Landscape – how did different actors define and redefine the landscape in relation to the relationships that they established? How could new interpretations of the landscape by other actors destabilize such relationships?

- Community - how did different actors define and redefine the 'Roşia Montană community' in relation to their positions? What were the more potent (political) interpretations of community which could destabilize such interpretations and positions?

- Links to place: roots, homes, memory – what was the relevance of such links to places for different actors? How was rootedness reconciled with mobility?

- Another aspect that was considered, but mostly in relation to the documentary sources, was the essence of place – how did the 'essential features' (variously defined) of Roşia Montană figure in the construction and transformation of place?

Analysis of the Information Gathered

The information gathered through interviews and that provided by the analysis of the documents were used to explore how social actors construct place in the stream of contingencies associated with the Roşia Montană conflict. The aim was to show how actors with varying degrees of visibility, both local and extra-local were active in thinking, (consciously) planning and carrying out their

individual or collective projects in the transformation of place. However, attention was also devoted to the unintended consequences of such actions (whether theirs or other's) and to actors' reflexive awareness of such consequences. The semi-structured or indepth interview material was assessed in terms of three categories: the awareness of the uncertainty / complexity of the situation at Roşia Montană, the *musing* over alternative interpretations or courses of action and the *identification of surprises and paradoxes* in one's or someone else's actions or intentions. No coding and no quantitative analysis of the interview material was carried out, but rather theoretically informed inferences from the material collected.

Limitations of the Methodology

First, social visibility is a theoretical construct that undergirds the analysis and assumes that, in relation to the RMGC project, different actors *can* and *do* make their voices heard in discursive as well as in material terms. If this assumption is undermined, that is, if some actors might emerge at some future point as the 'real' transformative agents, at the expense of others, the point of inquiring about the views and actions of a variety of actors becomes less relevant and possibly meaningless.

Second, physical visibility is a methodological construct and refers to who I, as a researcher and at specific moments in time, regarded as a more or less visible actor in the conflict over Roşia Montană. In this sense, it carried all the possible advantages and blind spots of my field research experience. I obviously did not cover the whole geographic area of the Roşia Montană commune and I also did not exhaustively survey the degrees of physical visibility of actors. In this sense, this form of visibility was amendable to improvements and higher specificity by the inclusion of other actors (with high or low visibility), which I did not consider.

Third, despite the length of time spent in Roşia Montană, I could not claim to have truly grasped 'what is really going on' in the field. My fieldwork resembled more a patchwork of insights gathered at different points in time, whereby the connections drawn between them could be plausibly defended only up to a certain point. On the other hand, even an extended stay of one or two years would have been – in themselves - insufficient to account for the uneven unfolding of the conflict. For example, the early-to-middle years of the project (2002 – 2003), were quite different from the later ones (2008 – 2009).

A related methodological risk is that the information collected at Roşia Montană involved an overrepresentation of agency, of discursive consciousness as opposed to practical consciousness, to use Giddens' terms. On their own, but especially in interaction with the researcher who was in Roşia Montană to find out what is going on with *this* project, people were likely to be 'overreflexive' about the many changes going on in (and around) Roşia Montană. The question regarding 'how life has changed since the arrival of RMGC' from the structured interview might have given good insight into people's discursive preoccupation with the present.

The next chapter will shift the frame of the discussion from the specificities of my research experience at Roşia Montană to a macro-sociological level. More exactly, the fifth chapter will outline the deeper structures in which the Roşia Montană conflict has taken shape over the years.

Chapter Five   From Singular to Plural Regimes of Production: The Free-Floating Place

This chapter deals with the trajectory of places through time, from the point of view of their external and internal dynamics. The Roşia Montană case is used to distinguish several phases in the making of a globalized place, in terms of the power regimes in which they were integrated. Its purpose is to explain under what sort of socio-historical conditions can *topogenesis*, as discussed in the third chapter, actually take place.

At Roşia Montană, three phases can be distinguished in the historical trajectory of this place, between antiquity and the first decade of the 2000s. These three phases are: the pyramid of places, the free-floating place, and the attempted re-mooring of place. Obviously, these phases are not clear-cut snapshots but thinking in terms of different moments yields a picture that seems both realistic and theoretically rich. In order to point out the merits of this perspective I will begin by suggesting several points of contrast between this approach and that adopted by much research dealing with the exploitation of resource-rich peripheries by powerful (usually Western) metropolises.

In this context, place is viewed as a more or less bounded economic unit. There are mining places, agricultural places, commercial places that are generally seen as playing a distinct economic role or set of roles and have more or less clear geographical boundaries. In the case of mining places, the question of boundaries can be settled with relative ease, because the location of ore deposits and of the settlements that draw on it

are relatively easy to map[33]. Sociologically and anthropologically, this is certainly an oversimplification, but the author assumes that it is useful for the purposes of the political economic analysis attemted in this chapter.

The key idea here is that over much of its history, Roşia Montană has been part of a more or less precisely defined economic structure. As an extractive economy, it has occupied a given position in what I call the *pyramid of places*. This is defined as a structure in which each mining place was integrated into a stable regime of production[34]. This structural integration was reflected in a given spatial structure, organized in terms of centre and periphery. The position of the centre has shifted over time, from Rome (when Roşia Montană was one of the hinterlands of the Roman Empire) to Vienna (during the Habsburg era) and Bucharest (the Romanian Kingdom and later the Socialist Republic of Romania). After the collapse of the socialist regime in 1989, Roşia Montană entered into a process of gradual loosening of its historic ties and became more and more a free-floating place. This meant that it ceased to be part of any definite regime of production and that its trajectory as a place was transformed into a bundle of trajectories along which the internal elements of a place – individuals and groups – tended to move along quasi-autonomous paths. What had previously been a rather unproblematic local community became a mosaic of dynamic local actors. The confrontation between the local and the global, in this perspective, became vastly more complicated than what it was possible to conceptualize under the glocality perspective, for example. The

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[33] In the current age of visual information technologies, mining professionals sometimes use 'google maps' to describe the location and surroundings of mines (e.g. Villas Boas in a post on the 'ecominerals' list serve recommended the identification of a 'good mine' by zooming in progressively on an area of Brazil).

[34] Burawoy (1998: 18) defines the political regime of production, as the regime of power which 'regulates the division of labor, the mobility between positions in the division of labor, rewards, and so on'. To this I would add, borrowing Gidden's (1984) and Sewell's terms (1992), all the schemas and resources used in economic production of a given kind, such as administrative rules, investments, infrastructure and all the elements of (industrial) culture.

third and last phase, which overlaped in part with that of the free-floating place, was the (so far failed) attempt to re-moor Roşia Montană to the global economy, this time following a neoliberal extractivist approach (Dietz & Engels 2017). Before outlining each of the three moments in the development of Roşia Montană it is important to distinguish this approach from the prevailing perspectives on the trajectory of places under globalization.

Conventional Approaches to the Trajectory of Place

When discussing the fate of places in a globalizing world, especially in its neoliberal developmentalist versions, the interest usually focuses on how local places resist or, in the case in which resistance fails or it does not take shape politically, how they are penetrated by foreign economic interests. It is usually assumed that local societies have, at some point, been more or less self-sufficient and sustainable places. Once these places became integrated into broader systems of economic production, such as colonies, important transformations ensued in their social, economic and cultural make-up (Goodmann 2006). As an illustration of this point of view it is instructive to take a closer look at Joseph Tainter's (2007) analysis of 'local societies in convergent evolution.' In order to explain the almost identical trajectory of two unrelated areas of the world (Epirus in Greece and New Mexico in the United States), the author invoked the 'disjuncture in scaling of economic, political and informational relations in world-systems' (2007: 361 – 362). The author outlined the steps in the convergent evolution of Epirus and New Mexico, and it is useful to contrast his description with the trajectory of Roşia Montană.

First, Tainter made a point of underscoring the remoteness of Epirus and New Mexico because 'formidable terrain and economic marginality kept villages isolated, closed, autonomous, and self-sufficient.' (2007: 370). As a result, the information pool was both homogenous and confined to the local level. Once this periphery

was incorporated into the larger economy, and the scale of political and economic relations shifted accordingly, a disjuncture in scale occurred: 'not only do such people lose autonomy, they may not know that they have done so' (Tainter 2007: 361).

This was certainly quite different from the case of a gold-producing area, such as Roşia Montană, which from the beginning could hardly be thought of as isolated. Even as early as the IXth century B.C., it appeared that trade in gold and silver extended throughout Transylvania and into central and northern Europe (Pârvan cited in Roman et al. 1982: 11). In 450 B.C., Herodotus wrote that the Agathyrsi, inhabiting the territory from which the river Mureş flows (in central Transylvania, some distance from the Western Carpathians), were 'greatly given to wearing gold' (cited in Matley 1971: 118). As for the remoteness of this area, even if it was geographically far from the centres of economic power of the Mediterranean world (especially Rome), its seclusion proved to be only a matter of time. In 106 A.D., the Roman emperor Trajan (53 – 117 AD)[35] conquered the territory known as Dacia (roughly present-day Romania) in order to gain control, among others, over its gold producing areas[36]. In short, it appears that the richer a place was in tradable commodities, the earlier it became integrated into extra-local economic relationships. It is no coincidence that the symbolic origin of Roşia Montană, that is the document which records its initial name – Alburnus Maior - is a mining contract, based on Roman civil law, which established the rights and duties of colonists (free miners) (Slotta and Wollmann 2002: 232). The colonists themselves came from several tribes of ancient Illyria as well as from Galatia, an ancient region of *Asia Minor*. It is known that the latter brought with them deities from their region of origin as well as some ancient forms of vocational

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[35] "Biography: Trajan" http://www.answers.com/topic/trajan [accessed September 8, 2009]

[36] Von Cotta (1861) first suggested that gold was extracted at Roşia Montană before the Roman conquest, by the Dacians, the inhabitants of what later became the Rom,an province of Dacia (Wollmann 2002: 27).

schools (Wollmann 2002: 30). From the beginning, then, the information pool of this place, as Tainter calls it, was anything but local. The movement of people and information, towards and away from the place, ensured a constant flow of information between the centre (Rome) and the new extractive periphery, as between the latter and those peripheries from which the specialized workforce of miners was drawn.

Second, it is usually assumed that local societies or communities are, before coming into contact with the colonial (or neo-colonial) pressures, largely self-sufficient and sustainable economic systems. Escobar (2006: 130) described the production systems of the river communities of the Pacific region of Colombia as 'more geared toward local consumption than to the market, and for this reason they have generally been sustainable.' Tainter made a similar argument about the initial self-sufficiency of Epirote and New Mexican villages in which 'environments were maintained to support the subsistence system' (2007: 370). It is apparent, however, that mining places can hardly be self-sufficient, because they depend on trade *ab origine* (Thompson 1932). But this seems to be true even with regard to the non-mining areas around Roşia Montană, which are located within the Western Carpathians. Matley (1971) pointed out that the agricultural and livestock resources available in these mountains have never been sufficient to feed the local population, at least throughout the 20th century[37].

Furthermore, Matley pointed out an interesting paradox which challenges the unqualified thesis of the original autarky of local communities:

> Although many of the male inhabitants of the Western Mountains left the region in order to supplement the meagre incomes of their

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[37] For example, Matley claims that 'before World War I no village produced enough bread for itself and only about half of the cereals it required, the higher mountain villages producing only about one-tenth of their requirements' (1971: 124).

families, the main source of income for the whole region lay in the rocks and rivers of the mountains themselves (Matley 1971: 124).

What does this mean from the point of view advanced here? It is not the purpose of this book to clarify all the historical reasons for which the area of the Western Carpathians obviously failed to be self-sufficient even though, to paraphrase a poem of Octavian Goga, which has also become a Romanian popular saying, 'our mountains bear gold.' Suffice to say that the economy of Roşia Montană and that of the mountain range of which it forms a part, has been, at least at times, far from the harmonious 'regional social economy' as suggested by sympathetic but not well-informed observers (e.g. Kalb 2006: 109).

If one uses the same framework as that outlined by Escobar and Tainter, it is very difficult to draw the contact / pre-contact distinction, between the place and the outside world, in the case under discussion. It is apparent, however, that the extra-local forces have not simply had the effect of undermining the livelihoods of the local population at Roşia Montană. In fact, one of the heydays of economic activity at Roşia Montană (which took place during the second third of the 19th century) has occurred, at least in part, under the active involvement and investment of the Austrian treasury (*Aerar*) in the development of gold mining (Wollmann 2002: 137–142)[38]. On the other, when state involvement has declined, in a relative sense, the local population has experienced reduced activity, periods of abject poverty and even undernourishment (Suciu 1927)[39].

The third and last aspect to be discussed, again in contrast to Tainter and Escobar's analyses, is the issue of environmental degradation. The peaks of mining were paralleled, at certain times, by the heyday of agricultural activities. Georgian, a mining engineer in Roşia Montană, recounted that during his childhood,

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[38] This process became manifest through the process of urbanization that Roşia Montană underwent from the early to the late 19th century (Pop 2002: 167).
[39] This is probably the first sociological monograph of Roşia Montană.

around the middle of the mid-twentieth century, the grazing grounds of Roşia Montană were filled with cattle (personal communication, 2006). But mining activities were also associated with (relative) deforestation, observed as early as the 18th century by Müller von Reichenstein (2002[1789]). The historic pictures taken in Roşia Montană in the 1920s, 1930s or 1940s show a landscape dotted with piles of tailings and very little forested areas (Slotta et. al 2001, vol. VI).

The first conclusion to be drawn from the foregoing is that mining places do not conform neatly to the before/after 'contact' view of the development of places. The shift from homogeneity to heterogeneity, from local autarky to externally induced dependence and degradation, from a local common pool of information to one that is differentiated does not apply to places such as Roşia Montană. The second conclusion is more theoretically ambitious and general: it posits that what characterizes the evolution of places at present is not simply the transformative contact with the outside but a process of differentiation in the power regimes of which they have historically formed a part. Regardless whether power regimes are local, national or global, it is likely that in the course of globalization places (viewed, again, as bounded economic units) will be liberated from a single power regime and enter into a more or less pronounced struggle between competing power regimes. This process leads to what I would call *free-floating* places.

Up to a certain point, the creation of such places was the result of globalization, viewed as a process of worldwide, profit-oriented competition which is essentially contradictory, heterogeneous and restructuring in its effects. This is the view advanced by German geographer Scholz, who posits as the outcome of this process a trend towards fragmenting development. At the local end of the scale, the process of fragmentation integrates some actors within networks of information and commodities while others, although sharing the same physical

places, are excluded from such networks (Scholz 2004: 5 - 6)[40]. This creates different and shifting groups of winners and losers (or pseudo-winners). In terms of the argument advanced here, and with reference to transnational extractive regimes, fragmenting development would take regions and nations apart and integrate some places within extra-local regimes, while excluding others. This creates a potential chasm between those who take part in development and those who are excluded from it altogether. According to Waack (2004), the mining project at Roşia Montană imposed a stark choice on this place. In Scholz's terms, it could either become a globalized place (dependent on an extra-local centre of power and only ephemerally integrated into a network of investment and information) or, in case the RMGC project failed, it could slip into the new periphery (excluded from any investment and perspectives for development) (Waack 2004: 98).

This is not the only source of differentiation in the regime of power (Carson and Koch, 2013). New development actors – especially civil society organizations – enter the scene and assert 'alternative' development scenarios. Some of those excluded by the transnational regimes of production can find their interests represented by the new actors and form transnational alliances linking peasants and slum dwellers with environmental or human rights activists. Their influence, although seemingly minor in relation to those of transnational investors, should not be underestimated. During the last two decades, counter-hegemonic movements have slowly gained momentum in the North but especially in the global South. According to Goodman, these movements displayed a distinct strategic logic: 'environmental justice campaigns focus on multi-faceted crises of exhaustion,

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[40] This is a fairly liberal interpretation of Scholz's theory. For Scholz's (2004: 1), globalization is fundamentally shaped by global competition and appears, in the sense, to be somewhat deterministic. Furthermore, for Scholz, place is not "any place", but refers to spatially concentrated activities which separate internally connected social, economic, political and cultural aspects from the outside. An illustration of places considered in this way are free production zones or investment promotion zones (Scholz 2004: 4).

including sociocultural and economic exhaustion' (2006: 161). Moreover, some of these movements have been quite successful in stopping, delaying or at least increasing the costs of resource extraction projects in different parts of the world[41]. This was also the case of the Roşia Montană mining project, for which the evaluation of the environmental impact assessment (EIA), on which the approval of the mining project depended, has been suspended between 2007 and 2010, due to legal challenges mounted by NGOs. The project was put on hold indefinitely starting in early 2014.

Although these movements are primarily justified and organized in terms of resistance to neoliberal developmentalism, they all propose alternative development paths. I would like to take this observation further and argue that, in fact, they can be viewed as advocating alternative power regimes. The need to move local communities towards a brighter future, either along the path of commodification or de-commodification, is universally felt by both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces. Because the latter are 'rooted in territories, ecologically attentive, often with access to democratic institutions, knowledge, and practices that predate globalism', they form the basis for constructing strong place-bound 'identities,' 'strategies of localization,' and 'political ecologies.' (Gismondi 2006: 137). The main actor, at the local level, is the community: 'community-based modes of regulation provide normative roots for the notion of democratically organized, self-regulating, and participatory civil commons.' (Johnston 2006: 59). It is my contention that, rather than taking the existence of communities or place-based identities for granted, a more sensible approach would be to explore local experiences and trajectories in terms of competing regimes of power.

The purpose of this chapter is, thus, to outline the process by which Roşia Montană moved from a regime of power based on

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[41] Some examples include the Phulbari coal project in Bangladesh, the Bujagali hydropower project in Uganda or the Ilisu dam in Turkey.

mining to a free-floating stage in which at least two regimes of power vied for domination: one based on a new, capital-intensive, large-scale mining project and the other based on the opposition to the mining project which sought to articulate an alternative development path for Roşia Montană, based on agriculture and tourism.

The Pyramid of Places

The pyramid of places has been constituted through a long historical process and has reached its most extensive form under the socialist regime. It should not be seen as a 'frozen-in-time' structure but rather as a historical process of stronger or weaker integration of a place into extra-local regimes of production. The main characteristics of the first stage and their dynamic will be described in what follows.

Since antiquity, administrative structures have been set up to manage the exploitation of gold in Roşia Montană and in the whole Golden Quadrilateral of the Western Carpathians, Romania. The effect of these structures was to tie the gold producing places to the respective centres of economic and political power. In pre-Roman Dacia, the exploitation of gold was the monopoly of the Dacian kings, who were famous for their gold riches (Roman et al 1982: 14). After the Roman conquest of Dacia under Trajan in 106 A.D., the gold mining areas came under the highest level of imperial control. The Roman emperors became the formal heirs of the Dacian kings. As imperial domains, the mining areas received the name of *aurariae dacicae* and were considered of great importance for the economy of the Roman empire (Wollmann 2002a: 27). After the withdrawal of the Roman administration from Dacia in A.D. 271/276, very little was known, and still is, about the organization of the Roşia Montană gold mining area. During the early Middle Ages,

however, the Hungarian kings gradually appropriated, over the course of the 10th to 12th centuries A.D., the Transylvanian lands with their rich resources of salt and precious metals (Gündisch and Beer 1998). Furthermore, we now know that in 1438 the Roşia Montană region was part of the Transylvanian 'union of German towns' (Slotta et al. 2002a: 9).

For the Habsburg monarchy of the 18th century, as for all absolutist states of Europe at that time, the gold and silver reserves where directly linked to their financial and ultimately military power. In the mercantilist theorists of the 18th century, therefore, gold mining played a vital role (Wollmann 1999: 41). At Roşia Montană, the Austrian treasury shared the extraction of gold with small private associations which were required, however, to encash all the gold they produced with the fiscal authorities. However, the treasury itself was involved in improving the productivity of the gold mines and of the processing of the gold ores. Among others, it financed the construction of two main galleries[42] (the 'Holy Trinity' [1753 – 1780] and 'Holy Cross' [1782 – 1850] galleries) (Wollmann 2002b: 128 – 132).

After the First World War, the newly formed national state of Romania[43] assumed an important role in coordinating and controlling the extractive industry (Baron 2006: 45). This was the case even if, during the interwar period and even afterwards, most enterprises in the extractive industry were private. For example, a survey of 1947 showed that only 5% of mining enterprises were state-owned ([Constantinescu NN 2000]). After the nationalization of the means of production in June 1948, the role of the state in the extractive industry was further consolidated through the creation of a *Ministry of Mines and Petroleum* and of several specialized bodies as part of the first

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[42] The German term is "Erbstollen", which refers to the lowest-lying gallery which is meant to collect the water infiltrated from the all the galleries above)

[43] On December 1, 1918, Transylvania joined the Old Kingdom of Romania (which was created in 1859 through the unification of Moldova and Muntenia, the two main historical provinces of Romania).

Communist-led government of Romania[44]. For example, the law on the control of production, processing and circulation of precious metals (638/1946) was modified in 1947 to include the requirement that within 15 days following the extraction of precious metals, the producer had to sell them to the National bank, which acted on behalf of the state (Baron 2006: 50). Even a 'police for precious metals' was created at the same time (Baron 2006: 51). The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum was itself reorganized to assume new responsibilities with regard to the 'rationalization and planning of production', 'investments and decisions for the setting up of new enterprises' and technical and vocational training and research (Baron 2006: 48).

The second feature of the process of establishing the pyramid of places was the effort to settle a specialized labour force for the exploitation of the gold mines. This began with the colonization of miners from three tribes of ancient Illyria (Pirustae, Baridustae, Sardeates) and of Greek-speaking colonists from Asia Minor. These groups ended up having a lasting influence on the social composition of *Alburnus Maior*, the ancient name of Roşia Montană (Wollmann 2002a: 29 – 30). Under the Hungarian kings, German miners (hospites) were colonized in the area with the right to extract gold from the Cârnic (Chernech, Cherneck) massif in Roşia Montană (Popoiu et al. 2004: 17). Documentary evidence showed that there were mining activities in the Cârnic as early as 1346 (Slotta et al. 2002b: 9). These colonists came to this area permanently and, at least in some cases, were completely "Romanianized" by the 19th century (Von Cotta 2002 [1861]: 354). During the eighteenth and especially during the nineteenth centuries Hungarians, Germans, Slavs, French and Italians came to the Apuseni Mountains, and to Roşia Montană in particular, as salaried workers in the gold mines (Mately 1971: 124).

This movement of the workforce towards the extractive periphery was followed by a parallel, but reverse, movement of

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[44] March 6, 1945.

knowledge and expertise towards the centre of administrative and political power. Beginning in the late 18th century, Austrian and German geologists and mineralogists visited Roşia Montană and reported their geological findings and sociological observations in the metropolises of the German-speaking world, especially in the imperial capital Vienna. The early accounts of Müller von Reichenstein (1789) and Johann Daniel Haager (1797) were followed by Franz von Hauer's *The Mining of Gold at Verespatak in Transylvania* (1851). Von Hauer, considered as one of the pioneers of German-speaking geology and palaeontology, wrote a powerful plea in favour of developing the gold mines at Roşia Montană:

> Among the most important and promising enterprises, which has been initiated by our energetic current imperial and royal ministry of [agriculture and mining], a primary position is taken by the great efforts to implement a rational and sustainable gold production at Vöröspatak in Transylvania (2002[1851]: 325).

At a time when relatively little was known about other Transylvanian villages and towns, the gold districts at the eastern border of the Austrian empire, including Roşia Montană, were systematically surveyed, visited and written about by scores of natural scientists and travellers[45]. Interestingly, the accounts given did not cover only geological data but present, sometimes in detail, the social and economic conditions under which the extraction of gold took place. Archaeological references and historical descriptions were also part of the early accounts of Roşia Montană and other mining places in Transylvania. For example, Von Reichenstein (2002[1789]) refered to traces of the 'old man' ('alter Mann') (presumably Illyrian or Roman miners)

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[45] A partial list of those who wrote about the gold mining districts of Transylvania includes: Johann Grimm (1852), Bernhard von Cotta (1861), Dr. Th. Weisz (1862), Franz Ritter von Hauer / Guido Stache (1863), Gustav Tschermak (1866/67 & 1868), Franz Posepný (1867 & 1870), Cornelius Doelter y Cisterich (1874), A. Hauch (1876), Filip Jakob Kremnitzky (1888), Carl Tavi (1888), E. Thilo (1889), Th. Weisz (1890-1895), L. St. Rainer (1897) (Slotta et al 2002).

found by the miners of the late 18th century. Franz Posepný provided a description of the hydraulic wheel found in the Cătălina-Monuleşti mine in Roşia Montană (Slotta et al. 2002a).

More importantly, however, in all these accounts it was obvious that the Austrian state's efforts to increase the productivity and efficiency of gold extraction had to take into account both the geology of the gold deposit and the prevailing organization of labour. In 1861, Bernhard von Cotta described the 'peculiar property relations in mining' at Roşia Montană, characterized by a large number of mining associations (about 300), with a total number of 900 associates, which operated a total number of 800 stamp mills (Von Cotta 2002[1861]). The 19th century traveller explained this state of affairs in terms of the peculiarities of the ore deposit itself: 'The occasion for these particular property relations was first offered by the unusual nature and exceptional number of gold-bearing deposits.' (Von Cotta 2002[1861]: 351).

To conclude, the exploitation of the gold deposits at Roşia Montană occurred under the joint conditions of the mercantilist policies of the Austrian empire and the geologic and social conditions which existed at Roşia Montană. Between the 18th and the 20th century, the extractive periphery became part of a relatively rigid structure organized at the imperial level or at the level of the nation state. The local and the extra-local were linked in a tight albeit unequal structure. The 'products' of mining were controlled by the state (in terms of prices and circulation) while the local welfare depended on the boom or bust of state-supported mining activity. The Austrian treasury, the Austro-Hungarian authorities and the Romanian state that succeeded them had limited options in choosing where to obtain gold and the mining place had limited possibilities of choosing alternative development paths once mining had become its economic backbone[46]. This is

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[46] This economic backbone, however, did not preclude alternative economic activities such as subsistence agriculture and cattle raising

so because the state tended to reinforce the path of mining areas, thus building such places into the pyramid of its power structure.

This is especially true with regard to the centrally planned economy of socialist Romania. The communes, towns and counties, and their economies, were part of a vertically integrated structure. This was even more so the case in the industrial sectors and especially in the mining industry. The socialist state was the owner of all economic assets, the manager of all economic activity, the only employer and also the sole provider of local amenities, infrastructure, social welfare (Zamfir and Zamfir 1999: 35, 37) and even of complementary employment for the miners' spouses (e.g. in the Jiului Valley). The paternalist state was not only ubiquitous but also formally benevolent. Miners enjoyed higher wages, compared to workers in other branches of the economy, and could benefit more easily from (state-sponsored) accommodation (Larionescu et al. 1999: 4 - 5). This was not simply the result of pro-mining attitudes of the socialist leadership, although miners were a symbol of the working class, but rather hard-fought concessions obtained by the miners. Miners have long been known for their high propensity for labour conflict (Kerr and Siegel 1954). The hotbed of mining militancy, in Romania, was the Jiului Valley. In 1977, a strike by the coalminers there was a serious enough challenge for the regime that the authoritarian leader Ceauşescu was compelled to come to the valley and address all their demands (shorter working hours, improved safety, better provision of foodstuffs etc.) (Larionescu et al. 1999: 4 - 5).

Roşia Montană Unbound: The Emerge of a Free-floating Place

This tight integration came to an end in 1989 with the collapse of state socialism in Romania. The first step in the creation of a free-floating place was the withdrawal of the state from the mining industry as part of the wider move of privatization and down-

sizing of the extractive economy during the 1990s. In official terms, the state decided to either privatize or abandon mining activities altogether because these were considered inefficient and loss-making. In 1998 industry minister Berceanu presented a mining reform programme. In this document, it was acknowledged that the absence of reform in the mining sector had created huge losses for the state budget and was, at the same time, a social problem due to the single industry development of mining areas throughout Romania, including Roşia Montană. According to the daily newspaper *Ziua*, the state had to pay over $4 billion between 1991 and 1998, and despite these subsidies, the lives of miners and mining communities had not been improved at all. The national problem (waste of financial resources) emerged therefore in direct connection with the local problem of mono-industrial development. The solution offered, however, pitted the national against the local interest: the state decided to reduce losses by scaling down its operations, closing down the most loss-making enterprises and laying off its workforce. In the future, mining towns were to follow unspecified alternative development paths.

This approach was in agreement with the outlook of the international financial institutions, which shaped Romanian economic policies after 1990. In fact, the reform of the mining industry took place under the auspices of the EU and the International Monetary Fund (McAleer 2003). The World Bank was to provide the expertise and the financial means for alleviating the social effects of mine closures (Larionescu et al. 1999: xx). The common wisdom that prevailed during the mid-1990s among Romanian officials was that mining had to be fundamentally restructured. In most cases, this restructuring involved mine closures. In a report released in March 1998, World Bank experts in Romania summarized the effects of state subsidies on the mining sector by pointing out the following deficiencies: the exploitation of marginal deposits; financially risky activities; inadequate technologies; and the use of an outsized workforce. They also highlighted the inadequacy of

existing regulations which had encouraged the continued exploitation of inefficient mines (especially underground) despite the decline in the demand for coal. Moreover, it was argued that these regulations had prevented private investors from offering both investment capital and modern technology in order to improve the efficiency of the mines (World Bank report cited in Larionescu et al. 1999: 7 - 8).

It is important to outline the specific conditions under which the withdrawal of the state took place in the late 1990s. First, the state gave up its role as shareholder and manager of mining enterprises but was willing to co-finance some of the private investments in the mining industry if these would provide employment to those who had become redundant. This financial commitment was, however, quite limited, given that the fund for the reconstruction of disadvantaged mining areas represented only 20% of the reduction in subsidies resulting from the mining reform (*Ziua* December 28, 1998). Second, the most decisive step taken to open the former mining area to foreign investment was the creation of 'disadvantaged zone'-status for mining areas. In the case of Roşia Montană, this official designation was issued in October 1999 and offered financial incentives for private investors (GR PR October 25 & December 15, 1999). Third, the state was willing to develop the local infrastructure to attract the much-touted investments and to manage loans from the World Bank for projects aimed at the reconstruction of mining areas (*Ziua* December 28, 1998). On the other hand, the reform programme proposed six strategies for ensuring the economic survival of individual miners. These strategies included both passive and proactive measures, such as financial compensation for 3 – 4 years after being laid-off (the most widely used measure), small incentives for redeveloping the closed mines or for the development/expansion of alternative family businesses. Local labour offices were put in charge of offering counselling and vocational training for the re-qualification/retaining of former miners. Former miners were also advised that they could find

employment with the companies in charge of carrying out the mine closure (*Ziua* December 28, 1998).

In brief, the strategy of the Romanian state for restructuring the relatively large mining sector of Romania[47] was either to close down the mines or to create the conditions for attracting foreign investments in the mining industry. At the same time, for the tens of thousands of laid-off workers the state envisioned *individual* coping strategies, by encouraging non-mining activities. In other words, the state separated the fate of the former miners from that of mining places, seen as economic units. This was one of the steps through which the former mining places, involved in an integrated pyramidal structure, were loosened from their historic linkages. The results were dismal, as the following account from a major coal producing area in Romania – the Jiu Valley – implied:

> After the fall of the Party-state, however, unemployment in the Jiu Valley rose and the region became a pariah for investment as well as an embarrassment for the nation itself, viewed both as an iconic example of 'regressive' opposition to democratic reforms and of embattled unionists advocating unrest to stop the withdrawal of the state from the economy (Friedman 2007: 422).

However, not all mining areas proved to be 'pariahs for investment'. Even in their last years of state ownership, some mining companies were still making profit (*Ziua* October 23, 1998 cited in Larionescu et al. 1999: 9). There were, however, significant regional differences. For example, even within the same state-owned autonomous administration[48] for copper mining in Deva, Romania, there seemed to be wide differences in profitability between different mining areas. Whereas in some areas of the Brad branch of the AAC Deva, the production of one

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[47] In 1995, the mining industry in Romania employed 190.000 workers, who had a total number of (about) 600.000 dependants (Ziua December 28, 1998).
[48] The Romanian designation is "regie autonomă". In what follows, the term autonomous administration (AA) will be used and the AA for Copper in Deva will be shortened to AAC Deva.

kg of gold required three times its value on the market, other areas (including Zlatna, Roşia Montană, Baia de Arieş and Abrud), received fewer subsidies despite having a higher productivity (Larionescu et al. 1999: 45). As a result, several gold producing areas drew the interest of foreign investors.

A report released by the World Bank office in Romania on the restructuring of the mining sector (March 1998) singled out two foreign private investors which have been active in forming joint ventures with the autonomous administrations in Deva and Baia Mare (cited in Larionescu et al. 1999: 46). These were Gabriel Resources, which created the 'Roşia Montană Gold Corporation' and 'Esmeralda Exploration' which created the 'Aurul' mining company in Baia Mare. The report mentioned that the companies were 'small' but given their combined investment of $12 million, they seemed to represent a hopeful sign for the generally bleak situation of the Romanian mining industry.

In contrast to other (coal-based) branches of mining, the gold mining industry was regarded in the 1990s as a quick way to stabilize Romania's weak and volatile economy (Argeseanu Cunningham 2005). In fact, gold seemed to be one of the few 'competitive' resources that Romania could bring to the world market, given that the other resources (such as coal) could not be mined profitably once subsidies were eliminated (Larionescu et al. 1999). Moreover, gold mining was one of the few early attractors of foreign direct investment at a time when FDI in Romania amounted to only $176 million per year, on average, between 1990 and 1996[49].

However, the story of the withdrawal of the state and the arrival of private investors did not conform neatly to the tenets of neoliberalism. Mining areas, especially the profitable ones, did not pass smoothly from the state-controlled political regime of production to one dominated by private interests. There were

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[49] Beginning in 1997, FDI exceeded $1 billion in each year since then (World Bank data).

several contingent processes that marked the political economy of gold mining at Roșia Montană (Vesalon and Crețan 2013).

First, the transfer between state and private ownership covered a grey area of more or less dubious deals between private investors / venture capitalists and representatives of the state-owned companies. The early years of the RMGC project were somewhat shrouded in haze, as they did not show up in the annual / quarterly reports or the press releases of 'Gabriel Resources'[50]. However, since September 1995, the date of the first bid for leasing the tailings ponds in the mining areas of the Apuseni mountains, the 'arrival' of the foreign investor had been the focus of criticism in the Romanian media. What were the reasons for this attack on those who were supposed to save the ailing mining industry in Romania?

The major point of contention was the exploitation of public goods – in this case the state-owned mining companies and their assets – by foreign private interests. According to *Ziua,* the AAC Deva had organized a bid for leasing the tailings ponds in the mining areas of the Apuseni mountains (in September 1995), which was won by "Gabriel Resources Ltd" of Great Britain with headquarters in the Channel Islands (*Ziua* May 10, 1998). Several problems were pointed out in this article: at the time of the bid, it seemed that GR did not even exist, as it was founded a year later. Moreover, the object of the concession was changed progressively, from the evaluation of the tailings ponds to the exploration and exploitation of the mining areas managed by AAC Deva (*Ziua* May 10, 1998). In June 1997, 'Euro Gold Resources' S.A. was legally established in Deva, as a joint venture between Gabriel Resources (65% of the shares), AAC Deva (33%) and three minority shareholders (*Ziua* May 10, 1998). According to the contract, 'Euro Gold' was granted the exclusive right to explore and exploit the areas managed by AAC Deva, including Roșia Montană and the

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[50] The earliest record, available on the GR website is dated February 11, 1999 http://www.gabrielresources.com/news-press.htm.

Bucium complex. Moreover, AAC was required to 'make every effort to secure the mineral exploration and exploitation rights in favour of Euro Gold, ensuring the exclusive operation of Euro Gold, by virtue of its administrative right'. The contract also stated that 'the [object of activity] can be extended to other mining areas' and that AAC Deva 'will apply for and receive the exploration and exploitation licenses (based on the new mining law) for areas deemed necessary for the project' (*Ziua* May 10, 1998).

The early years of the RMGC project were also marked by a controversy about the monopolization of the gold producing areas of the Apuseni Mountains by Gabriel Resources to the detriment of other 'serious' competitors, such as Placer Dome, Esmeralda or Noranda (*Ziua* May 12, 1998). In early 2000, Euro Gold Resources was renamed Roşia Montană Gold Corporation and in October 2000 the mining license for the Roşia Montană mining project was transferred to RMGC (GR PR October 25, 2000).

The overall argument is that there was no simple transfer from state to private ownership of the mining industry, but rather a gradual encroachment by private interests on the state-owned assets. The next sections will show that even if this movement was relatively unidirectional, and apparently irreversible, various contingent events blurred the path that was supposed to lead to the private ownership of the mining industry. All these points converged towards the view that Roşia Montană became in the mid- to late-1990s a free-floating place (Figure 5.1).
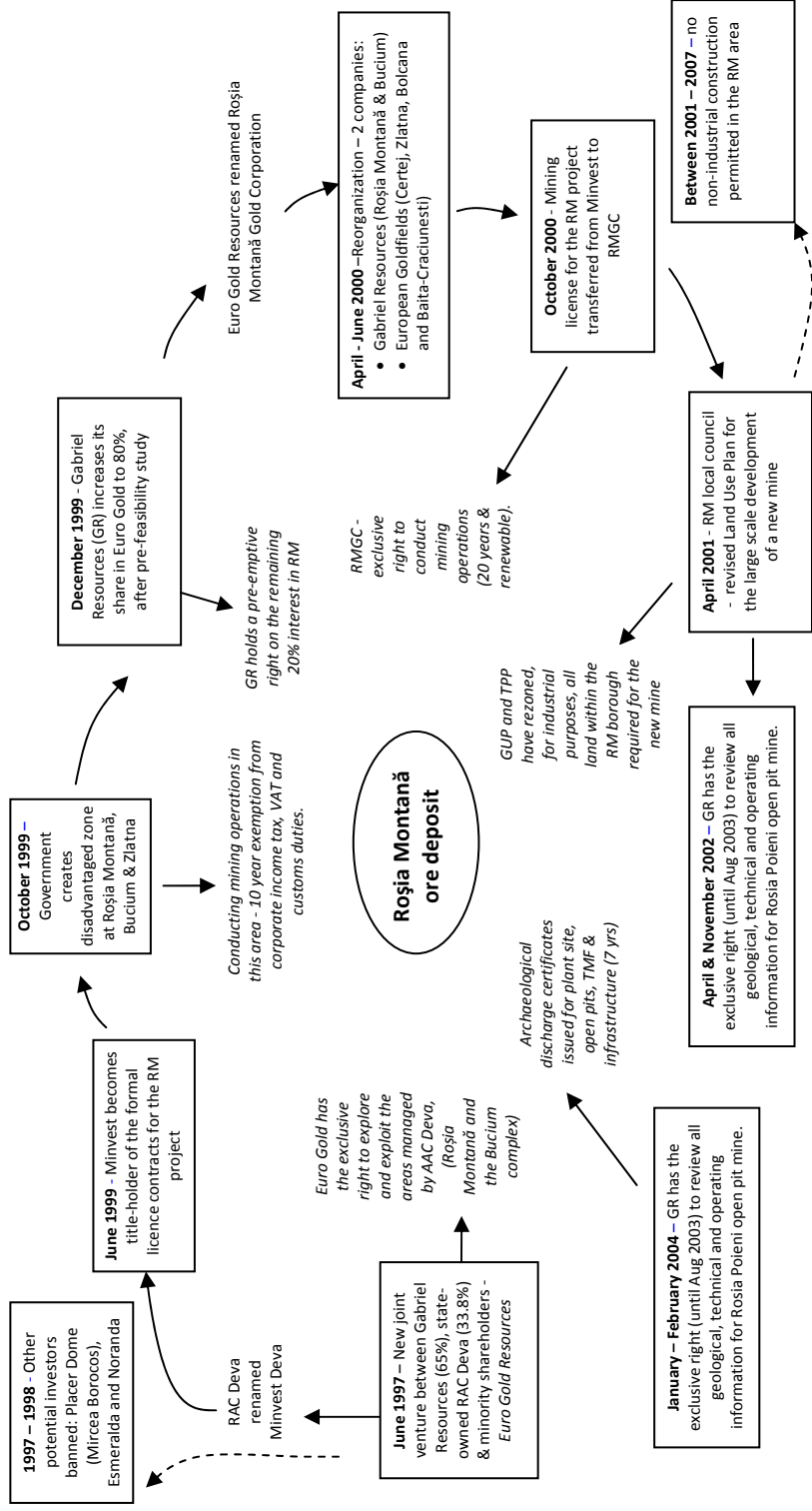
Figure 5. 1: **The corporate encroachment on the state-owned mine at Roşia Montană and the emergence of a free-floating place**

Source: the author's interpretation of various public sources.

Second, the small rebirth of gold mining in Romania during the 1990s had some large, and rather unexpected, consequences. As it happened, the first joint venture to reach the production stage was 'Aurul' in Baia Mare, a city in Northern Romania, in May 1999. 'Aurul' was established as a joint venture between Esmeralda Exploration of Perth, Australia, and the Romanian National Company for Precious and Nonferrous Metals (REMIN) in Baia Mare. The company was to process the tailings from the old Baia Mare gold mine in order to recover the gold and silver which could not be extracted with existing Romanian technology. Interestingly, the project also aimed to clean up the environment and move the tailings beyond the limits of Baia Mare city (Argeşeanu Cunningham 2005: 103). This promising beginning for the Romanian gold industry was, however, abruptly derailed by what has been described as an environmental catastrophe: a breach in the dam of the tailings pond occurred on January 30, 2000, releasing 10,000 cubic metals of slurry containing cyanide and heavy metals into waterways in Romania, Hungary and Serbia (Argeseanu Cunnigham 2005: 99, 105).

The reaction of the European Union was swift and it framed the issue in regional (rather than national) terms. The European Commission vice-president Loyola de Palacio said that 'this is a true European catastrophe.' (AFP February 11, 2000). The Baia Mare accident also prompted an expert meeting which drafted the so-called 'Berlin-Declaration on Gold Mining Using Cyanide Process' in 2000 (Müller et al. 2000). A few years later, the 'Protocol on Civil Liability and Compensation for Damage Caused by the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on Transboundary Waters' was signed by 22 states on May 21, 2003 at the Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference in Kiev, Ukraine (Antypas and Stec 2003). All these legislative and expert-driven processes, and others which followed throughout the early 2000s sought to render cyanide-based technologies for gold extraction unacceptable, at least in the European space. As such, they created difficulties in the development of the Roşia Montană mining project.

Third, the difficulties in starting the RMGC project were compounded by the hesitant involvement of the World Bank in the Roşia Montană affair. The World Bank was known as a major driver of development projects in many parts of the world, especially in the Global South. Some of the mining companies involved in developing natural resource projects has applied for loans from the private sector arms of the World Bank Group, namely the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) (Szablowski 2006: 249). Gabriel Resources was involved in negotiations with the IFC for several months in 2002 (GR *Quarterly report* 3/2002) but, in a highly controversial move, the IFC decided to terminate the negotiations with the Canadian junior mining company. The application for this $100 million loan was dropped in October 2002, but there are contradictory reasons given for the Bank's refusal to finance the RMGC project.

A World Bank spokesperson claimed that the decision was taken by James Wolfensohn, former World Bank's president due to "concerns about the project's social and environmental impact" (Beattie and McAleer, 2002: 13). International environmental organizations, such as Friends of the Earth (FoE), immediately proclaimed this as a 'victory' especially because, they claimed, 'Wolfensohn personally pulled the plug on the project after speaking with the two Romanian campaigners' (FoE 2002). The two campaigners were brought to Washington by FoE itself.

According to IFC officials, however, the decision to withdraw was made due to the availability of private financing for the project, against which the IFC was not allowed to compete (Beattie and McAleer, 2002: 13)[51]. As much as this statement seemed[52] reassuring for the, at least implicit, support for private investments in the Romanian mining industry, the *Financial Times* Romania correspondent noted that the World Bank withdrawal 'raised

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[51] It should be noted that the FoE article mentions this official statement by IFC representatives.

[52] An IFC representative disputed this claim in 2010 (personal communication).

environment fears' (McAleer, 2003). He noted that IFC officials expressed concerns that 'politically correct grandstanding' by the World Bank will be a disincentive for other mining companies in approaching them for financing (McAleer, 2003: 27).

In sum, while the loosening of Roşia Montană from the pyramid of places was obvious, the complementary process of reinserting it into a new, private, regime of production was far from certain. This was also due to the involvement of a variety of new political actors for which the political regime of production at Roşia Montană – and the development path of this place – became a hotly contested issue. All that used to be 'certain' remained in the past: Roşia Montană was no longer a mining place tightly integrated within imperial or national regimes of gold production. What seemed to lie in the future was the outcome of a series of interactions between a proliferating number of political and subpolitical actors (Beck 1992).

New and Old Political Actors as Supporters and Opponents

In addition to the political-economic changes outlined above, several political processes have marked the development of the Roşia Montană project. These processes mirrored the progressive 'liberation' (in the Marxist sense) of a mining place from within the extra-local power regimes in which it had been integrated for many centuries and its emergence as a free-floating place. The first process was the trajectory of formal political support for mining at Roşia Montană. The second was the emergence and the growing influence of a variety of civil society organizations which have found a new political voice, some of them for the first time.

Looking from the perspective of the year 2000, the integration of the Roşia Montană development project within a private regime of production seemed unproblematic. At that point RMGC had obtained the mining license for the Roşia Montană project. Moreover, Gabriel Resources had increased its share in

RMGC to 80% (from 65% three years before) and had a pre-emptive right over the remaining 20%. Most importantly, however, the company enjoyed political support from the government: 'the development of new mining projects such as Roşia Montană, the largest known gold project in Europe, will be fully supported by the Romanian Government' (GR PR March 31, 2000). This situation did not last long, however. In subsequent years, as the project drew increasing opposition form a variety of actors, the political support seemed to resemble a random walk with some leaders supporting the project while others rejecting it (see the Appendix).

In July 2003, a parliamentary commission lead by Romanian MP Alexandru Sassu, submitted a report on the RMGC project to the Romanian parliament. Despite some caveats and requests for 'continued monitoring', the report was broadly supportive of the project which '[would] provide significant benefits to Romania and its economy' and 'revitalize the Romanian mining industry', while complying with Romanian and EU environmental regulations (GR press release July 7, 2003; *Ziua*, April 27, 2004). At about the same time, however, Romania's prime minister Adrian Năstase claimed that the project, which received initial green light when his party was in opposition, involved 'very large risks', both socially and environmentally (*Ziua* June 6, 2003; Greenpeace 2006). He added, in a strong nationalist vein, that Romania should not allow itself to become an economic colony: 'the days when the Romans came and dug for the country's gold are long gone.' (*Ziua* June 6, 2003).

The ups and downs of political support were quite numerous, but they did not lead to any political decision in favour or against this development project – a characteristic of free-floating places. This random walk seemed to have entered a new phase, beginning in late 2009 when a proposal emerged to moor the free-floating place to the national economy. This attempt was only short lived and Roșia Montană continued its free-floating path. With the trial Gabriel Resources vs. Romania

(beginning in 2015) the project and its outcome are increasingly shaped by an ongoing and still undecided international arbitration (Bejan et al. 2015). In this book, however, the focus is on the free-floating period of Roşia Montană and the conditions under which the locals found themselves under two competing regimes of power.

The preparations for the RMGC project were protracted and covered more than a decade. First, although the mining company (Euro Gold Resources) was founded in 1997, it took two years for the pre-feasibility study to be completed (December 1999) and another two years for the first and second feasibility studies (August and November 2001) to be carried out. Second, in October 2002 RMGC submitted the 'project description' to the Romanian government while the 'project presentation report' followed two years later (December 2004). Finally, RMGC filed the environmental impact assessment (EIA) in May 2006, almost 9 years after the company was founded. However, in September 2007, the review process of the Roşia Montană EIA was suspended by the Romanian minister of the Environment due to the fact that the urbanism certificate, which was apparently needed for the EIA approval, was invalid (GR PR 1999 – 2007). The document was found invalid following a court challenge led by two organizations, the local NGO Alburnus Maior and the Soros Foundation (*Financial Post* September 14, 2007).

These long delays allowed for the gradual consolidation of the opposition against the mining project. The first important step was the founding of the NGO Alburnus Maior (AM) consisting of 300 local families opposing the project, in September 2000. This was, in fact, the final point of a process of grassroots organizing which had began three years earlier, in 1997. At that time, the founder of Gabriel Resources, Frank Timiş, initiated a meeting at Roşia Montană to discuss the future mining project, without inviting the residents of the commune. After the meeting, Valeriu Tabără, a Romanian deputy and president of PUNR, addressed the locals who had gathered in

front of the building where the meeting was held and told the disgruntled Roşieni that they needed to get organized, otherwise they would be 'eaten up' by the company (Adrian, personal communication, 2009). Soon afterwards, the cause of AM spilled into the national and even the international activist arenas.

The next significant moment in the strengthening of the opposition was the arrival of Stephanie Roth in Roşia Montană (2002), a 'globally-networked environmental activist and former campaign editor for The Ecologist' (Ban and Romanţan 2007). She joined AM and set up a website in English and Romanian to disseminate information on the struggle against the planned mine. According to Ban and Romanţan (2007) Roth helped connect the Roşia Montană movement to large international NGOs such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth or MiningWatch. In 2005, Roth was awarded the Goldman environmental prize for grassroots activism, with the financial award of 125.000 USD being used to support the growing 'save Roşia Montană' campaign. In January 2004, AM began its strategy of challenging in court the permits and authorizations needed for the RMGC project. By mid-2007, this strategic litigation began to show its fruits, when courts started to pass judgment against the company (Ban and Romanţan 2008).

The Re-Mooring of Place or Its Continued Free-floating?

As much as the trajectory of the Roşia Montană since 2000 appeared to be a random walk between support and opposition, with no clear resolution and a generalized reluctance to adopt any political decision for or against the project, at the national level, the free-floating of this place was about to change in late 2009. More precisely, in December 2009, the minister of the economy, Adriean Videanu, stated openly that he '[wanted] this project started as soon as possible' (Vasâlcă 2009). *Evenimentul zilei,* 18 December 2009). Moreover, the government programme 2009 –

2012, approved by the Romanian Parliament in December 2009 mentioned under its 'energy and natural resources' chapter the provision that the government would carry out a 'national strategy for the development of non-energetic mineral resources *and the re-evaluation of the Roşia Montană project*' (Government Programme 2009 – 2012[53], emphasis added). Such an explicit endorsement of the RMGC by the government and its economy minister were unprecedented. It should come as no surprise that this decision did no go unchallenged. The environment minister, Laszlo Borbely (from the Democratic Union of the Hungarians in Romania) stated that he will not approve the project unless he was 101% certain that it would not pollute (Ruscior, 2010).

This suggested that the Roşia Montană project was about to move up in the political agenda, from being a development project to solve the ills of an impoverished community to being a project for saving the economy of Romania in times of crisis. In June 2009, a Romanian daily pompously announced that it had identified 10 super-projects that would revitalize Romania's economy: among them, the Roşia Montană project, 'one of the most interesting but also contested projects for the extraction of natural resources' (Bădică 2009). There are ever more insistent voices who asked 'what should the state do about the gold at Roşia Montană?' (*Evenimentul Zilei* December 11, 2009). A journalist from the latter newspaper proposed a scenario that revealed the reasoning at that time:

> Imagine that you have inherited the map of a treasure. You are not very well-off, therefore you look for prospective partners to begin the treasure hunting. After closing the deal, your partners do their job (estimate the treasure, find the way to it etc.) and you all set off to search for the hidden treasure. Once you are there, however, you discover that local people stand in your way. The search is stopped. Now you have three options: to continue the search regardless of the costs; to give up the project; to wait for the situation to be clarified and to renegotiate your share of the treasure. At the same time, a good and a bad fairy show up: the

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[53] Available at: http://www.gov.ro/capitolul-17-energie-si-resurse-minerale__l1a2074.html (Romanian only).

> bad one tells you that you are overdue in paying your rent and that you have to pay your monthly bill. The good one tells you that the treasure will be worth more several years from now. 'The temptation of reaching for the "gold in Apuseni" is very great in these uncertain times' (Mailat 2009).

Such points of view were very rare a few years before. Back in 2006, the stakes of the Roşia Montană project were eminently local. The project was supposed to create workplaces to benefit the local community. In its first advertising campaign (November 2005 – December 2006), RMGC described Roşia Montană as a problem area, with deep social and environmental scars left by the Communist mine. The second ad campaign, which took place in 2009-2013 focused exclusively on what benefits the mining project would bring to Romania.

There was an even more striking piece of evidence that the politics of scale had shifted from local to national scales. The president of Romania, re-elected in 2009, Traian Basescu, declared that the fate of the project will be decided by the Supreme Council for the Defence of Romania (Bancheș 2009). This statement, made on a local TV station in Bucharest, suggested several things. It revealed the intention of the then president to 'short-circuit' the regular administrative procedures for approving the project[54]. The Supreme Council for the Defence of Romania (SCDR) was a limited-membership and conservative decision-making group which was supposed to work under exceptional circumstances, such as war. It consisted of 13 members, including the president of the country, the prime minister, six other ministers, two leaders of Romanian secret services, two military leaders and one advisor. It was conservative because the ministers involved (economy, interior, finance, national defence) represented the interests of the *status quo*.

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[54] According to RMGC Non-technical summary of the EIA "due to the project's size, the environmental agreement would have to be issued through a Government Decision according to article 19 or the Government Emergency Ordinance number 195/2005 concerning environmental protection." (RMGC *Non-technical summary* 2006: 13).

The attempts to re-moor the place to the national economy have proved futile over the following years. The recovery from crisis and the legal battles won by NGOs have thwarted any plans to use the RMGC project as a growth strategy for the Romanian economy. In this way, Roșia Montană has quickly reverted to the status of a free-floating place, actively fought over by the supporters and opponents of the proposed mine, but with no clear resolution.

This chapter has traced the history of Roșia Montană as a mining place inserted into a pyramidal structure of economic dependency, followed by a loosening of its economic ties and by attempts to re-insert into new circuits of capital at the national and international levels. This trajectory has left its mark on the ways in which this place has been experienced by both insiders and outsiders, as will be explained in the following chapter.

Chapter Six   Location, Landscape and Community as Experience-distancing Processes

The Transformation of Roșia Montană

Even in their primeval (i.e. pre-modern, pre-global) form, places are extremely complex structures of experience. Relph captured this complexity of lived places in a very suggestive formulation by calling it a *chiaroscuro* of setting, landscape, ritual, routine and so on, all of which can occur at different scales of experience. However, he immediately cautioned the reader that 'while complexity and variety of scale may well be desirable qualities in terms of our experiences of places, when it comes to trying to understand place as a phenomenon these same qualities present major stumbling blocks' (Relph 1976: 29). This raises the practical problem of were to begin the analysis of the experience of place. The Canadian geographer proposed that the sources for the meaning of place could be found by exploring the role of location, of landscape, of time, of community, of private and personal places, of rootedness and care for place, of home places as centres of human existence, of the drudgery of place, and of the essence of place (Relph 1976).

All of these aspects of place are fashioned with the implicit assumption that the experience of place is fixed, or at least fixed at a given scale. However, it is possible to take advantage of this framework for analysing the process of the transformation of place. I choose three of the dimensions suggested by Relph,

namely location, landscape and community. These seemed to me to be the most intensely contested features in the conflict over Roșia Montană (cf. Ban and Romanțan 2007, Pop 2008, 2014, Alexandrescu 2012).

(Dis)locating the Place: The Mining Company

The sociology of flows has seen a significant impetus in environmental sociology through the work of Mol and Spaargaren (2005, 2006). According to these authors, the sociology of flows aims to put 'global fluids, global network dynamics, and the "space of flows" on the research agenda, rather than localities, static practices, and the "space of place"' (Mol and Spaargaren 2005: 97).

Bringing up the idea of flows and fluidity in the context of the discussion of place and location might seem contradictory. If flows are 'footloose' and global flows render the 'clustering of objects in regions around which (nation-state) boundaries are drawn' increasingly untenable (Mol and Spaargaren 2005: 101), is it not anachronistic to refer back to places as the main actors in the play of globalization? It is my contention that flows are an indispensable process in the transformation of place. In other words, thinking in terms of flows is indispensable in order to understand how dynamic places come to be located and re-located. But flows are not the only processes that shape the experience of place. Pathways and the articulation of cultural spaces also influence the experience of place.

For the moment, however, I will inquire into what role did flows play in the initial distancing of Roșia Montană. In the terminology proposed above, flows were part of the experience-distancing processes which affected places under globalization. The initial moment of displacement was of crucial importance for understanding the transformation of Roșia Montană.

How did the transition of Roșia Montană from a stable position within the pyramid of places to a free-floating trajectory

play itself out in the experience of location? Location obviously refers to geographic location but it also has a broader meaning. It points to the relative position of a place within specific spatial frames of reference. During the socialist period, the relevant spatial frame was the diverse regional economy of the Apuseni Mountains (Vedinaş 1999), the 'golden polygon' of the Metalliferous Mountains (a specific mountain range within the Apuseni Mountains), the extractive sector of the socialist economy in general and, ultimately, of the socialist (and later post-socialist) state. With the loosening of Roşia Montană from the pyramid of places, the global investors who first arrived in this place in 1995 and later founded Gabriel Resources and RMGC sought progressively to distance it from all these spatial frameworks, in two main ways.

First, the investors engaged in the task of distancing the knowledge of place, geological knowledge in this case, from a model of local production – local consumption to one of transnational production – global consumption). What were these two models concretely? Unlike the vast majority of mineral projects, where there is no knowledge of the deposit before the advent of mining companies and their geologists (cf. Trigger 1997), Roşia Montană had been explored intensively by mineralogists and geologists starting in the late 18th century (see chapter 5 for more details). Moreover, the geological knowledge on the Metalliferous Mountains and Roşia Montană in particular had accumulated at an accelerated rate beginning in the inter-war period until the end of the socialist regime (1990) (Sîntimbrean et al. 2006: 26)[55]. The practical value of this accumulated stock of knowledge was employed locally, for the development of the state-owned mines in Roşia Montană and the rest of the golden polygon. For example, in 1990, local geologists assessed the mineral reserves of the Roşia Montană deposits as follows:

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[55] These authors cite no less than 35 studies published between 1933 and 1990.

Mineral deposit	Gold (Au) - kg -	Silver (Ag) - kg
Cetate	15,188	167,416
Cârnic	13,201	137,164
Cârnicel	1,560	1,638
Orlea	94	1,024
Văidoia	935	11,055
Total	30,977*	318,297

Source: Sîntimbrean et al. 2006: 59. The total differs from the sum of the individual values because the latter have been rounded to facilitate reading.

In contrast, the production of geological knowledge by the transnational investors occurred under different parameters and with entirely different consequences regarding its consumption. The process of re-assessing the deposit by Gabriel Resources involved an extremely complicated web of transnational flows of expertise, money and materials (e.g. rock samples) circulating between geographically distant locations. Just to provide a brief snapshot of the networked creation of geological knowledge in the case of Roşia Montană, below are two excerpts from the press releases of GR:

- In 1999, GR contracted the Resource Service Group, an Australian exploration, mining and resource consultant, to estimate the gold resources. It further assayed the rock samples at a laboratory located in Roşia Montană but operated by Analabs Ltd, based in Perth, Australia. The assays[56] themselves were carried out by Bondar-Clegg, a Canadian laboratory. Finally, in order to identify the most appropriate process for gold extraction, bulk samples of several rock types from Roşia Montană were sent to an 'independent' laboratory in Salt Lake City, Utah (GR PR February 25 & 26, 1999).
- In early 2000, Gabriel engaged Minproc of Perth, Australia, to coordinate the preparation of a definitive feasibility study on GR's Roşia Montană project together with Resource Service Group of Perth, Knight Piesold of

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[56] Assay refers to the "qualitative or quantitative analysis of a metal or ore to determine its components" (http://www.answers.com/topic/assay).

> Vancouver, Canada and Ashford, England, and Planning Alliance of Toronto. (GR PR August 14, 2001).

In the first years of geological exploration at Roşia Montană, GR reported large variations in its assessment of the resource and reserve estimates[57] of the gold deposit. In 1998 it reported between 31,103[58] kg and 62,206 kg of inferred resources of gold. One year later (1999) it announced 130,634 kg of measured and indicated resources (more certain than inferred resources), while the end of 1999 saw a further increase in the resource estimate to 202,172 kg. In 2000 the estimate was updated to 255,048 kg. Finally, in 2003, the company announced an impressive exploitable reserve of 329,696 kg of gold, which was subsequently (2005) reduced to 314,145 kg (GR Annual reports 2004 & 2005).

However, the Roşia Montană deposit became truly distanced not simply through its integration into mineral and geological knowledge networks but rather through the consumption of this knowledge. In contrast to the geological exploration carried out before 1990, the knowledge produced beginning in 1997 was to confirm a 'world-class gold asset', as the 2002 *Annual Report* of GR proudly announced on its title page. The news began to circulate almost instantly through the networks of mining investors. It is instructive to cite the account of Doug Casey from the *International Speculator* (September 16, 2006) on the Roşia Montană deposit:

> Unlike the majority of our field work, in the case of Roşia Montană our due diligence didn't involve kicking rocks on the deposit to verify that the company is indeed on to a major deposit. Of that, there is no question. That's because Roşia Montană, which has been mined back to the Roman era, has been drilled extensively in recent decades, leaving no question about the world-class nature of the mineral asset.

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[57] Mineral resources are considered "those economic mineral concentrations that have undergone enough scrutiny to quantify their contained metal to a certain degree". Mineral reserves, one the other hand, are those resources which are known to be economically feasible for extraction (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mineral_resource_classification).

[58] To facilitate comparison, I converted the troy ounces in which gold reserves are currently reported into kilograms (1 oz = 0.0

and, later on:

> Make no mistake; large, well-defined gold deposits like Roşia Montană are extremely rare and exactly the sort of thing resource-hungry major mining companies are likely to buy at a substantial premium.

In 2002, the *Northern Miner* – a Canadian mining journal - published an investment commentary on the deposit 'identified' by GR. The commentary cited analysts from Dundee Securities, Canaccord Capital and HSBC Securities which made various assessments on the opportunity to invest in GR, noting, for example, that the feasibility study revealed excellent economics. The analyst of HSBC Securities claimed that 'we continue to believe that a larger-scale, low-cost undeveloped asset like Roşia Montană could prove very attractive to the industry's largest producers, which now face the task of continuously improving their portfolio of projects.' (*Northern Miner*, Mar 18/24, 2002).

Despite the outstanding words of praise among investors, there was an 'if' that still prevented the 'herd of institutional investors to pile in, sending the GBU [Gabriel Resources] shares to the moon', according to Casey (2006). He explained this as follows:

> So it's not the geology but the politics of trying to build a mine in the face of environmental opposition that has GBU selling for about $30/oz of gold in the ground, versus a more typical $100/oz for the kind of resources it is known to possess.

The true nature of the experience-distancing produced by the seemingly neutral dissemination of geological knowledge can be judged from the discrepancy between the RMGC estimates and those produced by local geologists in 1990 on the amount of gold to be found at Roşia Montană. More precisely, the Romanian geologists estimated a gold reserve ten times lower than that which was eventually announced by the Canadian mining company (30,977 vs. 314,145 kg). This is how a Romanian geologist, who spent many years at the Roşia Montană state enterprise before 1990, described this obvious discrepancy:

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[The state-owned mine] possessed an impressive amount of data which would have allowed it to assess the real geologic and mining potential of the deposit. Every increase in the reserves of ore, of gold and silver, would have implied an increase in the extraction and processing capacities.

[However], the main concern has been a sustainable and rational exploitation, the development of the locality, the securing of an increased number of workplaces and the formation of highly qualified personnel. *No mining expert thought of a [megaproject] which should involve the short-term liquidation of the deposit and of the two localities, Roşia Montană and Corna* (Sîntimbrean et al. 2006: 60; emphasis added).

It seemed, therefore, that it was not the lack of sufficient knowledge which prevented a large-scale exploitation of Roşia Montană during socialism, but rather a different social use of this knowledge. Aunt Olga, an old resident which I interviewed in Roşia Montană, made a similar argument: 'the gold exploitation should be rationed and not be [extracted] all at once. […] And we have to think about the future of our youth, in the same way as others thought about us.' (Roşia Montană, 2007). Matei, a local businessman from Roşia Montană, provided an interesting story which illustrated the awareness of the local implications of what might otherwise be seen as neutral geological knowledge. Before 1989, he talked to a mining engineer who was supposed to deliver an assessment of the deposit to former socialist leader Nicolae Ceauşescu. Before going to Ceauşescu, the geologist met an advisor of the socialist leader and showed him the assessment.

… The advisor asked the geologist:
Advisor: Do you have children?
Geologist: Yes, I do.
A: And you don't want them to have what to eat [in the future]?
G: Yes, I would like that.
A: Then please go and redo the assessment with only 15% of the deposit.
And he did [this] and [although] he misinformed Ceauşescu with 85%, when Ceauşescu saw that there is so much gold here, he immediately ordered 40 new mining trucks. Can you imagine what he would have ordered if he would have been told the truth? (Roşia Montană, 2007).

In contrast, the knowledge produced by GR distanced the geological data from their socio-historical context, it stripped the know-how of local contingencies and responsibilities, in order to offer the most attractive commodity on the global minerals market: 'the largest gold deposit in Europe.'

Distancing knowledge and making it available to global investors was, of course, only one step in securing access to the exploitation of the gold deposit. Roşia Montană itself, as a territorial unit, had to be extricated from a variety of regional and national connections to make it amendable for inclusion in the world-wide expansion of mineral projects.

The first important moment involved securing the 'right' to explore and exploit the mining areas managed by the state-owned company AAC Deva[59]. This took place in June 1997 when Gabriel Resources (GR) formed a joint venture company with AAC Deva under the name 'Euro Gold Resources'[60] (*Ziua* May 10, 1998). In June 1999, the state-owned company Minvest Deva (the heir of AAC Deva) became titleholder of the formal license contracts for the RM project. In December 1999, after completing the pre-feasibility study, GR increased its share in Euro Gold Resources to 80%, while holding a pre-emptive right on the remaining 20% interest in the Roşia Montană project. In 2000, Euro Gold Resources was renamed Roşia Montană Gold Corporation (RMGC). A decisive step for securing access to the Roşia Montană deposit was taken in October 2000 when RMGC was granted the 'exclusive right' to conduct mining operations for 20 years and even longer if the license were renewed.

The second important moment in the process of making the asset accessible and tradable in the arena of global investment flows was the granting of a 'special status' to the Roşia Montană area. In October 1999, the national government conferred the

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[59] AAC refers to the Autonomous Administration for Copper with headquarters in the city of Deva.

[60] Gabriel Resources had 65% of the shares while Minvest 33,8%, the rest being distributed among three minority shareholders.

'disadvantaged zone' status to several mining areas, offering investors a ten-year exemption from corporate income tax, VAT and customs duties. In April 2001, the Roşia Montană local council issued a revised Land Use Plan, making Roşia Montană an 'industrial area' to allow the large-scale development of a new mine (GR PR June 30, 1999 – April 25, 2001). Being legally defined as 'disadvantaged' (which meant in need of investment) and 'industrial' (no other formal economic activities were permitted in the area), Roşia Montană was distanced from most of its spatial dependencies and was inserted ever stronger – at least in legal terms - in the flows of the global minerals market.

Each step in securing rights over the new 'property' of Roşia Montană was accompanied by the mobilisation of venture capital for the proposed mine. In March 1999, GR completed a 'private placement' of $4,6 million ($0.75 per share), followed one year later [March 2000] by a $16 million private placement ($2.30 per share) and a $10 million placement ($3.5 per share) in July 2001. In 2002 it managed to attract $56 million worth of investment ($3.5 per share) and in 2004, $25 million. The latter financing, although not as significant in absolute terms, signalled the entrance of a truly global player in the emerging investment flows targeting Roşia Montană. This player was Newmont Mining Corporation, known as one of the world's largest producers of gold[61]. This process strengthened the integration of Roşia Montană into transnational flows. This happened when large and well-established companies, such as Newmont, and junior mining companies (Gabriel Resources) form alliances which, at least for a time, facilitate the flowing of benefits: the large companies provide 'expertise, finance and fund raising respectability' while the junior companies often act as 'anonymous'[62] fronts behind which

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[61] Newmont is currently listed as the third largest gold producer world-wide in terms of market capitalization
(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Largest_gold_companies).
[62] There are many junior mining companies with a variety of names, therefore it is difficult to know which large company(ies) are involved in the thousands of mineral project throughout the world.

respectable companies can engage in controversial projects *(Forest Peoples Programme et. al* 2000: 6). Roșia Montană appeared to be a prime example of this process.

The third and possibly most consequential moment in the distancing of Roșia Montană was the acquisition of surface rights from the 'property owners' to make space for the mining project. This involved purchasing the land and houses of the population from Roșia Montană residing within the project footprint. This seemingly administrative procedure revealed something interesting: experience-distancing sometimes takes place through an initial process of experience-nearing, which enables *learning.*

Experience-distancing obviously required the previous knowledge of that which is to be separated and removed. As such, nearing was an integral part of the process which ultimately aimed to displace the local from its original socio-historical matrix. On the local level, however, the reverse process took place. The *near* contact with the actors who carried out the displacement enable locals to learn what distancing means and even how it can be negotiated. This engendered various forms of resistance to the smooth advancement of the distancing process. It should be noted that, in contrast to Escobar (2001, 2008), this resistance was not taken as something inherent either in the culture or ecology of the place, but in the human ability to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the increased space of agency opened up by a free-floating place (Baldus 2016).

The Unexpected Consequences of Distancing: The Extra-local Opponents

Experience-displacing processes of the sort analysed above sometimes result in the unexpected creation of *alternative* experience-distancing dynamics. First, this occurs because, by stripping the experience of place of its local specificity, it makes the place recognizable as a more general *type* of place, a place

that acquires meaning for broader publics beyond potential investors and for broader political constructions than mere economic calculations. Second, the construction of distancing carried out by extra-local actors is paralleled by learning processes through which local actors can find ways to use their very nearness to negotiate and possibly alter some of the conditions under which distancing takes place.

It is usually assumed that flows have experience-displacing effects. In other words, local histories, local geographies and individual and collective experiences are separated from each other and from the place itself by the structuring effects of flows. Castells (2000: 446) claimed that, for instance, 'the space of power and wealth is projected throughout the world, while people's life and experience is rooted in places, in their culture, in their history.' Moreover, local experience becomes increasingly powerless and meaningless, according to Bauman, who argued that 'being local in a globalized world is a sign of social deprivation and degradation' (1998: 2). He further explained that localities tend to lose their meaning-generating and meaning-negotiating capacity and come to be 'increasingly dependent on interpreting and sense-giving actions which are beyond their control' (Bauman 1998: 2-3).

It is my contention that flows do not simply deterritorialize places, they do not simply render them irrelevant in the space of flows. The operation of flows on particular places is more complicated than has been recognized until now. This is because once a flow is set into motion it triggers other flows (or counter-flows) which evolve in little expected ways, interacting with the initial flow and mediating its effects on places. The reason is that the initial experience-distancing processes create a recognizable image of place, such as the image of 'endangered places', as will be discussed below. Rather than being pure, disembedded entities, in a globalizing world flows have acquired emergent properties. For example, flows of investment from the capital-rich centres aiming to appropriate the resources of the old and new peripheries have generated flows of resistance, every bit as fluid

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and encompassing – if not as influential - as the 'logic of global power [which] escapes the socio-political control of historically specific local/national societies' (Castells 2000: 446). Indeed, according to Mol and Spaargaren, the mobility of environmental ideas, information, and interpretation frameworks circulating along networks and nodes around the globe could be interpreted in a similar way as material and investment flows (Mol and Spaargaren 2005). It seems that little attention has been paid so far to the interactions of these flows. Even less interest has been devoted, to my knowledge, to the effects of these interactions on the distancing of place experiences. The emergence of counter-hegemonic flows is not the end but just the opening of a wide field of proliferating flows, as both capital and movements seek allies in a variety of geographic and discursive spaces.

There is, however, a difference in the *content* of the distancing produced by counter-flows in contrast to those produced by flows, understood in the conventional sense of the term as flows of capital driven investments and expertise. If the latter seek to extract from places only that which is relevant to the global investment flows, in the minerals sector for example, counter flows tend to follow the reverse logic. They explicitly value the local, the specificity of place, and their struggles revolve around preserving the intactness of the places which are 'threatened' by investment flows. They thus seek to follow an experience-nearing logic of the local in opposition to the distancing tendencies of the market-driven flows. This is achieved by articulating a discourse on 'endangered places' (cf. Vidal and Dias 2015). The outcome of this interaction between experience-distancing and experience-nearing, both emerging at the level of flows, is worthy of renewed attention.

There is little question that the opposition to the Roşia Montană mine proposal has quickly emerged as a transnational network of activists. To some extent, even the grassroots organization opposing the mine – Alburnus Maior (AM) – was triggered by an extra-local actor, the deputy of a Romanian

nationalist party who had visited Roşia Montană in 1997. A lawyer from Alba Iulia drafted the first statute of AM. The decisive moment in the organization of the movement was the arrival of several transnational activists at Roşia Montană, among them Cezara.

What did Cezara bring with her to Roşia Montană? Apart from her organizing and networking skills, she also brought her determination to help simple people anywhere to fight more efficiently against 'destructive constructions and environmental injustices' (Dulămiţă 2010). She came to Roşia Montană to 'fight for this place to stay as it is' (cited in an interview from the *New Eldorado* documentary by Tibor Kocsis 2004). She was extremely precise in naming what she is fighting for:

> Roşia Montană has flowers and rivers and families and so much more. This is what we fight for. It's about life, it's about colours, it's about people, it's about rights and justice.

Her efforts and those of all the other extra-local activists could be read as an effort to re-emplace what is at risk of being torn apart by the bulldozing power of global flows. Cezara herself engaged in a process of experience-nearing, by learning the language, interacting with and even spending extended periods in the place that she wanted to defend. When I asked her about the most important thing or things that anyone inquiring about Roşia Montană should know, she answered:

> That this is a conflict between a community and Europe's largest open cast cyanide gold development. This is how I would put it in a nutshell.

The answer expressed an obvious fact, the RMGC project was indeed the largest proposed gold mine in Europe. On the other hand, the focus on conflict could be seen as somewhat distinct from the concerns with lack of workplaces and the 'dying area' of Roşia Montană, with livelihoods, place attachment, history, gold and past riches or the demand that 'the truth' about

the project be known etc. This observation raised for me questions about the actual relationship between experience-nearing and distancing. Rather than independent and opposed, they should be seen as dialectically related. The problem of the defence of place (which presupposes experience-nearness) by globally networked actors (inevitably experience-distant) is clearly revealed in a discussion with Cezara.

From the point of view of an activist career, pointing out the conflict as one between 'the biggest' threat and the 'small community' seemed to make much sense. In another interview [carried out together with Violeta, a fellow PhD student interested in Roșia Montană] Cezara explained in more detail why the Roşia Montană case is worthwhile for her. She argued that of all the countries she has seen, the campaigns in Eastern Europe were the most interesting. She set in contrast the activists in this part of Europe with those in England, for example, and claimed that the latter sometimes simply become cynical. In the East, she argued, 'the ways that people fight back are very intelligent'. More importantly, the struggles in Eastern Europe were more challenging:

> I really admire this [determination] and I think that this is the real thing here, this is the real thing. I think in many other places, it is just easy campaigns, call them [stage-like] campaigns I would call them, sort of fancy campaigns, winnable campaigns...

For her, the campaigns fought in Eastern Europe were 'extremely real' and this was a compelling – but by no means singular - reason to pursue a rewarding activist career at Roşia Montană:

> So Eastern Europe is the new "wild, wild west" and the people are reacting and they are reacting very intelligently to it [to the impact of the market and privatization], and I really think this is...I am following closely what is going on around the world and... campaigns and I think that *this is definitely the place to be.*

Endangered places, places at the centre of environmental struggles, places where real people fight against companies are,

therefore, 'places to be' for those animated by different values than those of accumulation: '...they are values about what kind of world you would like to live in, and these values are what moves the people and I think you can never loose a campaign if you keep listening to your values and if you re-evaluate your values with yourself and if you are honest to them' (Cezara 2007).

For this activist, therefore, the nearing of the experience of Roşia Montană co-existed with the tendency to distance the reasons for her activism from the idiosyncrasies of place. Indeed, if activism is seen as a movement from place to place and from 'cause' to 'cause', it is obvious that one has to explore the meaning of pathways in the experience of location.

Transformations in the Experience of Location: Pathways and Cultural Spaces

The transformations in the experience of place – taking the form of either nearing or distancing – manifest themselves not only through the intersections between places and flows but also through pathways and the mapping of place onto vast cultural spaces.

Pathways can be viewed as the most immediate translation of experience-nearing and distancing in physical space. Pathways lead towards, or away from, a place. Pathways can be seen as the visible manifestations of flows. They are, so to speak, the concrete trace of flows which link places with each other. Pathways denote both the physical path (road, river, valley etc.) and the movement along that path. It is important to think in terms of pathways since they guard against *a priori* assumptions about the immobility and seclusion of places. Places are connected to other places, and the pathways that link them are the best proof of the networked nature of place (cf. Cronon 1992). The experience of place, even that grounded and experience-near, is always more than the experience of the place itself because it includes, at the same time, both movement and steadiness.

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Thinking in terms of pathways reveals how places partake in the incessant movement of flows; pathways occupy, from this point of view, an intermediate position between flows and place, between what is usually thought of as fluidity and fixity. In other words, pathways mediate between place and flows.

The last section ended with the suggestion that activism can be regarded as a pathway. Indeed, the extra-local opponents of the RMGC project, which later proved to have a lasting influence in the course of the struggle over Roşia Montană, came to Roşia Montană following specific pathways. Stephanie Roth, for example, arrived at Roşia Montană after following a trajectory connecting many places and countries. She was born in Switzerland, moved when she was 6 to England and spent some time at a Catholic school in Southern Germany. While studying international relations at the University of London, she spent four months at the Chitwan national park in Nepal. After graduating and completing a master's in philosophy at Cambridge University, she followed the famous pilgrimage route 'Camino de Santiago' in Spain. Between 1997 and 2002 she was news and campaign editor for *the Ecologist*. She resumed her travel but this time with an activist vocation, by helping activists fighting against a motorized road to Cape Horn (Chile) and those opposing a mine in the Huaraz region of Peru. Her activist pathways brought her to Romania in 2002 to oppose the Dracula theme park that was to be built near Sighişoara in central Transylvania. She heard about the Roşia Montană project from a journalist of *Formula As*, a Bucharest-based weekly magazine (Ion Longhin Popescu), and went there to see 'the place [which would host] the largest gold mine in Europe' (Dulămiţă 2010). Since then, she returned to Roşia Montană many times.

Several journalists of *Formula As* developed a lasting interest for Roşia Montană and provided in the pages of this weekly magazine extensive accounts of what might be called ethnographic journalism. Their paths returned repeatedly to Roşia Montană because, as one reporter put, he 'felt guilty for not having sufficiently explained the endlessly tragic story of these places'

(Turcanu 2002b). Francoise Heidebroek, a Belgian activist who opened a guest house in Bucium said that during the first summer after she opened this place she had people coming from Hungary, Germany, Austria, Belgium and, furthermore, 'everybody wanted to come back' (Heidebroek 2004, interview in Kocsis documentary, 2004). The two 'solidarity marches' of those opposing the RMGC project, between Cluj Napoca and Roşia Montană (2003 and 2004), could also be seen as part of the same recurrent movement to the new hotspot of environmental activism: Roşia Montană. What were some of the consequences of all these recurrent movements on the experience of location?

The activists' incessant movement had the effect of creating an image of fixity of the place. Perhaps unwittingly, movement created stasis in the experience of location. Witness, for example, how Ţurcanu repeatedly portrayed his own movement towards and within Roşia Montană against a more or less unchanging background. 'I am hurrying again towards the magic place which has inflamed over millennia the [gold] lust of empires...' (Ţurcanu 2002b). 'The reporter's boots rummage the red dirt of these mountains ground away by history and indifference' (Ţurcanu 2002b). 'A face without a name watches the reporter as he explores this settlement [Bucium], researching the fascinating world of the village probably unchanged for centuries...' (Ţurcanu 2002b). Finally, 'the reporter will have left without any answer, will have walked the wonderful streets bordered with stones, will have swam through the hazy mist as that following a cataclysm' (Ţurcanu 2002c).

The discovery of place by extra-local activists could be interpreted, at least at first sight, as one of experience-nearing. All those who came to Roşia Montană did so in order to *learn* about the place and about the conflict. The effect was, however, one of experience-distancing. Reporters, activists and the opponents of the mining project in general followed the path to Roşia Montană in order to find out what the place was about.

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Unsurprisingly, they only 'saw' those locals who were opposed to the mine and determined to continue to stay in Roşia Montană. For example, the 2003 solidarity march was greeted on the last day by the 'Roşia Montană people [who] oppose the mining project'[63]. In this way, those willing to leave Roşia Montană became invisible. The dilemmas, hopes and fears of those who wanted to follow the *pathways out* (rather than the circular pathways of activists) of Roşia Montană remained unrecognized and in effect ceased to exist in the public consciousness. Roşia Montană became entrenched in its specific location at the same time at which a large number of its residents became mobile.

In terms of process, these observations should alert researchers to the ways in which experience-nearing can, in fact, engender experience-distancing. The complexity of movement in a place such as Roşia Montană was lost from view in favour of a focus on stability and lack of change, at the very moment that the place had become highly dynamic. What does my own attempt at nearing reveal about the pathways of activists?

Although Roth had lived on and off in Roşia Montană over more than ten years, some residents of Roşia Montană tended to see her as a passing activist. Alexandru from the NGO supporting the project claimed that after Roşia Montană, she would move on to other issues, such as Bechtel, the American company that was set to build a highway in Western Romania. Not an outspoken supporter of the project, Mihnea was critical of Greenpeace (probably he would include Roth here as well) because 'they [had] trashed our Dracula park project and now they have come to Roşia.' Even among some opponents of the mine there were fears that the staunch extra-local opponents of the mine would follow the pathsways *out* of Roşia Montană. In an interview at the Roşia Montană foundation, Mihai said:

> Let's say, if the company leaves tomorrow, I think that others will forget about us as well. I think... maybe I am wrong. [...] Now we

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[63] Roşia Montană solidarity march http://www.rosiamontana.ro/mars2003/page3.html

need, I told you already, support. And they can say: "Well, we supported you, we saved you from the ugly monster, now you figure out for yourselves [what to do]."

In more veiled terms, this respondent sensed the propensity of extra-local activists to move on to other issues, once a given case was 'solved'. After all, they came to defend an endangered place. When it is not longer endangered, it lost its relevance on the map of global activist flows. This was certainly a controversial conclusion that I reached, but it was defensible at the end of the *local* stage of the conflict, around 2010. The ongoing stream of social change (Weber) would certainly create the need to reconsider it in light of new dynamics.

Some Unexpected Outcomes of Pathways: The Locals

Before emerging as a flow of transnational investment, the mining company humbly treaded the road to Roşia Montană as a small group of geologists. Adrian, a former miner in Roşia Montană, recalled how in 1995 he helped Stephan, Amelie and their child, an Australian family, during their first winter in the Apuseni mountains. When the company increased in size, they needed more office space and Adrian offered to rent a room in his house. More foreigners began to pour in; some of them married local women. Then, one day, Stephan told Adrian and his father-in-law, while sitting in the central square in Roșia Montană': Can you see this mountain? It will be gone in 15 years. It's going to be exploited by a company.' Then rumours emerged that they would buy up houses. At that point, journalists also started to pour in. After they heard what is going to happen, Adrian and his family weakened their relationships with the Australians. Worse still, Adrian 'heard that they will leave and others will come'. The contract for the rented office space expired and he was not willing to renew it. Significantly, Adrian later became one of the opponents of the proposed mining project.

This first contact with the geologists who later opened the path for Gabriel Resources showed, in a nutshell, the workings of learning in the relationship between experience-nearing and -distancing. The first and close contact with the initial experience-displacers enabled a learning process about the future Roşia Montană as a global, de-contextualized asset, which ultimately engendered opposition. Adrian was not the only one to undergo this experience. Monica, an old lady who initially worked for GR as a cleaner, became one of the symbols of the opposition to the new project after she heard that 'they want to push them out of their homes.' Furthermore, Dorin and Iulian, the main leaders of the opposition, became opponents of the mine after they were, apparently, denied jobs with RMGC. Regardless of the specific details of these cases, they all suggested one thing: the experience-displacing efforts of the company were unexpectedly thwarted by those who learned the fastest, and in the most immediate fashion, what displacement involves.

The influx of foreigners and the spreading of the news about Roşia Montană were amply captured in the accounts of the residents of Roşia Montană. With some resentment, several respondents complained that the company employed the 'children of bosses, from Bucharest or Câmpeni' (Petra, Gura Cornei). In an interview with the author, Teodora claimed that the mining company has hired people from other areas, rather than from Roşia Montană. Cristian added that the company also hired from Deva and Brad, two industrial towns in Western Transylvania. Doru used a Romanian saying ('The fish begins to stink from the head') and claimed that the head is in Bucharest and the tail is in Roşia Montană: 'The directors brought their relatives from all the other areas [of Romania]'. An older respondent, Aunt Olga, said that Frank Timiş, the first chairman of GR, 'has brought here the biggest mafia. From here to Bucharest, one big mafia'. Alina felt very humiliated when she tried to find employment with the company for her spouse and daughter, while the company employed people from Deva and Alba Iulia.

Others, however, recalled their interactions with the 'foreigners' in more favourable terms. Nicolae, for example, said that he was on good terms with the expatriate employees who worked as drillers in Roşia Montană between 2003 and 2004.

Apart from the extra-local employees of the company, the influx of foreign activists did not go unnoticed. Those employed by RMGC, for example, pointed out that the mining project had attracted people who 'wanted to stick their nose into the Roşia Montană [affair]'. Nadia added that 'they come from many corners [of the country], they come to Roşia Montană and take pictures. They only come now, that is interesting.' Grigore, another employee, argued that it was only then [2007] due to the company and the project, that people all over Romania have heard about Roşia Montană. Alexandru, the local dentist and chair of Pro Roşia Montană, was quite critical of those who came to oppose the mining project and allegedly spoke on behalf of the locals. He was born and raised in Roşia Montană and attended university in Cluj Napoca. Although he was the valedictorian of the medical school, he decided that it is his duty to return to Roşia Montană, according to his account. This gave him the moral right to speak about Roşia, unlike those 'greens' who only came to this place a short while ago.

Prompted by a question in the interview, Liviu, the director of RoşiaMin, offered an elaborate critique of the 'very many outsiders' who came to inquire about what is going on in this place. According to him, those who came usually 'failed to properly connect with the locality, they did not know where to go and ask certain questions and they left after one day or one hour with a totally biased idea about what is here.' Interestingly, Liviu pointed out another way through which outsiders 'came' to Roşia Montană, following an *imaginary* pathway.

Liviu went to see the screening of the Tibor Kocis movie 'New Eldorado' in Cluj Napoca. He was surprised when a participant stood up and said that, because so many people are leaving Roşia Montană, they [people from Cluj], wanted to become

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citizens of Roşia Montană. The interviewee felt somewhat offended when that person added: 'Well, we want to be legally registered in Roşia Montană, but not actually move there.' Liviu concluded bitterly:

> It is very nice for me to stay in Cluj or in another city of Romania, to go about my business, [have] my job, [enjoy] the theatres, the shops, and life in shoes walking on asphalt and be a citizen of Roşia Montană, without bothering what someone from Roşia actually does at -25 C in the winter, with many outdoor toilets...

There was, however, a more widespread and unsettling feeling about the outsiders who came to Roşia Montană. In a way, it seemed that many locals have got a glimpse of the flows that have brought so many outsiders to their locality. The pathways of these outsiders did not end in Roşia Montană; the place appeared rather a stopover in a more complex network of pathways. Consequently, their allegiance to the place was seen as fluid as the flows themselves. The unsettling experience of fluidity, which came through in several interviews and observations, was shared by both opponents and supporters of the mining project.

The chair of Pro Roşia Montană, an NGO supporting the RMGC project, stated that he supported the project but not as strongly as he did in the early years, because of the changes in the leadership of the company and the fact that the project was started anew [in 2005]. Tudor also lost his trust in the company when 'the directors began to be changed repeatedly'. Aunt Olga mentioned that even before the arrival of RMGC, there were no less than 11 directors of the state-owned company. Directors came and went and, with them, the hope and fears of the locals. Anca, an RMGC employee at the time of the interview (October 2006) regarded the changes in management that took place in 2005 in a positive light: the 'community' was given more consideration than was the case with the former leadership of the company (2000 – 2005). However, she was apprehensive, for reasons that will be discussed later, that a Romanian

management team could replace the current management. She suggested in this way that even among local employees the fluidity of global capital and management was noticeable and possibly worrying.

Cultural Spaces: The Extra-local Opponents

Pathways are ways of nearing and distancing the experiences of place. What are called here 'cultural spaces' are the more or less stable configurations resulting from the process of nearing and distancing. They are the spatial anchor points of iconic places.

From this perspective, the struggle over Roşia Montană entailed struggling over where to locate Roşia Montană on the cultural map of the world. More exactly, to the actors involved in the conflict it seemed to matter a great deal whether Roşia Montană and, by extension, Romania as a whole, were a 'First World' or a 'Third World' place, if they were located in Europe or outside of Europe, if they were worthy or worthless from a cultural point of view etc. In other words, the question was whether this particular place and its future development could be subsumed under some larger cultural meaning and purpose. So, first, what did Roşia Montană mean? In a cultural space, places are attached to (and are considered to 'stand for') certain values or dissociated from certain other values. Places in conflict are associated with or dissociated from certain cultural spaces. Cultural spaces are ideological constructs, which assume that certain spatial entities (territories, states or regions) are homogenous from a cultural or axiological point of view. Examples of such cultural spaces are 'Europe', the 'Third World', the former 'socialist block', all of which suggest that the lives and experiences of those inhabiting those spaces are structured by specific sets of values.

At Roşia Montană, there were certain key terms that fleshed out the meaning of cultural spaces enveloping this place. On the one hand, metaphors such as 'heart', 'roots' or 'heritage' linked

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Roşia Montană to wider spaces suggesting a sort of cultural wholeness. On the other hand, the mining project was seen as a 'rupture' of this place from its embedding into the European heartland (reminiscent of Mackinder's geopolitical theory) and its casting into the barbarisms of the Third World.

For most of the extra-local project opponents, Roşia Montană was undoubtedly a profound ingredient of European identity. In evaluating the historical role of Roşia Montană for the mining history of Europe, there was a general agreement that Roşia Montană had played a significant part in the history of gold trade in Europe. The mining historians Rainer Slotta and Volker Wollmann (2002: 227) contended that:

> [Roşia Montană] would hardly deserve a closer look if it were not one of the mining centres not only of Romania, but also of Europe.

The Romanian historian Horia Ciugudean pointed to the importance of the mining museum in Roşia Montană, opened by Aurel Sîntimbrean by linking it to its European-wide significance:

> Thanks to this initiative, in very few places in Europe can one descend [into galleries] and follow into the footsteps of miners [who worked there] 2000 years ago, as it happens in Roşia (Ciugudean cited in Popescu 2002a).

Journalists have taken the European heritage motif still further and have helped create a nascent mythology around Roşia Montană as a European mining place:

> [The company's propaganda] claims that it has discovered the largest gold deposit in Europe, when the whole of Europe has known this for thousands of years, when the first mines of this old continent have been here [at Roşia Montană], when the sole reason for which the Romans have coveted the lands of the hyperborean gods have been the hundreds of tones of gold which they have taken from here…. (Țurcanu 2002b)[64].

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[64] Antic historians consider the gold treasure captured by the Romans from the Dacian king Decebalus as being the largest treasure since the conquest of the Orient. The estimate suggested by Jérôme Carcopino, which is also supported by Preda (1956), puts the amount of gold at about 165,000 kg of gold and 331,000 kg of silver (cited in Roman et al. 1982: 14).

and, along the same lines:

> [Roşia Montană] was a kind of El Dorado, a sort of home for European gold, the gold from here can be found in the whole world, carried by the merchants of 2000 years ago, it can be found in Berlin, Vienna, Budapest, the gold of the Apuseni Moutains has saved Rome from bankruptcy during the [reign of] Trajan, the endless gold of Roşia [Montană]…(Ţurcanu 2002b).

However, some European historians have gone one step further, moving from historical argument to political statement. It was not only that Roşia Montană had been historically linked to Europe. Given Romania's efforts to join Europe economically and politically, Romania was advised that its cultural heritage ceased to be a matter of strict national concern. Werner Eck, a well-known professor of ancient history at the university from Cologne, put the matter succinctly:

> If Romania wants to join the European Union, such an archaeological complex does not only belong to her; it also belongs to the European Community, and this should apply even now [in 2003, before Romania's EU adherence in 2007] (Werner Eck cited in Popescu, 2003b).

The contours of Roşia Montană as a 'European place' became more precise by arguing to what places Roşia Montană *did not belong to*. Ţurcanu (2002b) explained that the extraction of gold as it was envisioned by RMGC could only be found in Australia, in Africa or in Peru, high up in the mountains. Similarly, in a letter sent to the president and the prime minister of Romania, Alburnus Maior (2002) argued that unlike similar large-scale mines in South America or South Africa, the area of Roşia Montană was inhabited. Heidebroek further reinforced the cultural boundaries of Roşia Montană by claiming that 'the Eurogold project, based on cyanide, at such a large scale, has never been and will never be accepted in Europe.' (Heidebroek, 2002, emphasis added). In a different instance, she added: a project such as the one of RMGC was 'typical for the Third World, not for Europe' (Heidebroek cited in Popescu, 2003c). For these opponents of the mining project, 'only a

few poor countries [presumably accept] these barbarian practices [closed-circuit cyanide processing in an open environment]' (Tatar cited in Popescu 2002b). For Hans J.A.M. Scholten, a Dutch entrepreneur who had opened a bakery in a Transylvanian village, the proposed project was incomprehensible since Romania was not a 'banana republic' (cited in Popescu 2002c). Along the same lines, Bernhard Drumel, the director of Greenpeace Austria, explained that Romania's environment was far from the catastrophic situation found in Amazonia or China, but warned that Romanians should be mindful of Western companies who want to exploit Romania's nature for mercantile interests (Drumel cited in Popescu 2002d). And Şerban Cantacuzino mused over the question if the actions and intentions of RMGC could be found 'in certain African states' (cited in Popescu 2003f). Finally, at a public meeting taking place in 2003, during the US war in Iraq, a local leader of Alburnus Maior, claimed that the project would bring 'desperation, estrangement, loss of local identity, poison in the air and water, shattering noise from explosions, worse than in Iraq...' (cited in Popescu, 2003c). The apocalyptic scenario brought about by the RMGC mining project was seen as ultimately non-European. Alina Lengauer, law professor at the University of Vienna, stated the matter most explicitly:

> In light of the EIA [Directive], this project should never be approved! At no point in history have transatlantic mining companies operated in Europe. They went to South America, to Africa, to Asia, but never on our continent (Lengauer cited in Popescu 2004, emphasis added).

In at least some quarters of the Romanian media, these words resonated powerfully. Criticizing the *Mine your own business* documentary, Popescu (2006) noted sarcastically in the national daily *Adevărul* that 'the Canadians from Roşia Montană [want to] move Romania to Africa'.

The proliferation of iconic images around Roşia Montană should not obscure the micro-geography of this place. Several

respondents pointed out a significant change in the history of Roşia Montană, from being a destination of migration to being a place that people wanted to leave behind. Livia of Bălmoşeşti said that 'this was an area where people from everywhere used to come and now even the locals cannot find their place here', because of the lack of workplaces. Even among some of those who had left Roşia Montană, and later lived in the city of Alba Iulia, the image of an attractive place was significant. When asked about the most important thing that anyone inquiring about Roşia Montană should know, Dumitru and his spouse, the first to relocate from Roşia Montană described it as a 'rich, a very rich settlement. It used to be very beautiful, with good opportunities. When we were younger, [life] used to be very good in Roşia. People would come from the surroundings to work [there].' The image of the 'original' bounty of Roşia Montană was further emphasized by Ștefania and Cătălin, two other early relocatees from Roşia Montană:

> Roşia was a treasure. They [refers to those who are against the project and who are allegedly not from Rosia] should be grateful because many came to Roşia Montană only with cloths and they left with a lot of money. Roşia Montană has been like a parent to them.

All these observations show how distancing occurs – both physically and metaphorically – and how the place is rendered deeply relational rather than being essentialized. For these former inhabitants, Roșia Montană is a station along their life-course, which cannot be defended in terms of its intrinsic qualities. For them, solidarity is not one of place but of fate.

Place and Landscape

One does not have to be an environmental determinist to recognize that the visual appearance of a place – its physical features, whether 'natural' or 'artificial' – are one of the defining characteristics of that place. Relph (1976: 31) discussed the

relationship between place and landscape both as more or less mystical conceptions (landscape as the inner, hidden force of a place) and as perspectives which separate the experience of place from that of the landscape. Cresswell (2005) took this distinction further and illustrated the difference between place and landscape through the experience of the hero of Raymond Williams' novel *Border Country*. Williams brought forward 'the gap between the idea of the village as 'landscape' and the idea of the village as a lived and felt "place"' (Cresswell 2005: 10). It is important to recognize, with Cresswell, that 'we do not live in landscapes, we look at them.' (2005: 11). Places, on the other hand, are for many people the taken for granted contexts of everyday life, whose naturalness is captured in concepts such as the 'reliability of places' (Wakefield and Elliott 2000: 1152). In the terminology developed here, we take place and landscape as the ideal typical endpoints of processes of experience-nearing and experience-distancing, respectively.

There are, of course, different types of landscape and place experiences and the purpose of this section is to outline the most apparent ones in the case of Roşia Montană. For the extra-local actors, who were also the most visible contestants in the conflict over Roşia Montană, landscape took diametrically opposed meanings which could be labelled the 'industrial landscape' for the pro-mining camp and the 'leisure landscape' (see also White 1996) for the opponents of the mine. In both cases, we deal with a landscape, seen from outside, which is represented and acted upon in different ways by groups supporting and opposing the mine. The industrial and leisure landscapes emerged in close connection with each other and both were discursively transformed in the course of the struggle between the project supporters and opponents (Pop 2008, 2014). However, interestingly, while the leisure landscape remained relatively unchanged over time, the industrial landscape underwent substantial transformations.

The industrial landscape refered to all the representations and practices of the project developers aimed at transforming

Roşia Montană from a mixed-use[65] historic mining area into the site of a large-scale open-pit mining project. The leisure landscape captured the representations and practices of the extra-local project opponents whose aim was to 'fight for this place to stay as it is' (Cezara cited in an interview from the *New Eldorado* documentary, 2004).

The Leisure Landscape: Extra-local opponents

According to White (1996), environmentalists tend to separate neatly work in nature from play in nature. They 'readily consent to identifying nature with play and making it by definition a place where leisured humans come only to visit and not to work, stay, or live.'

First of all, a leisure landscape is one that is seen/discovered and appreciated by a travelling outsider. Stephanie Roth (2004) described her first visit to Roşia Montană (April 2002) as follows: 'And I saw this place and it broke my heart…'. Similarly, Roşia Montană was discovered by Françoise Heidebroek, another prominent opponent of the mine, after a long journey: 'She has travelled extensively all around the world, she has seen many beautiful places and finally she stopped in the Bucium-Poieni village in the Apuseni mountains[66]…' What was heart-breaking about this 'place' (in fact a landscape) is described below.

Second, the landscape was appreciated for what it conveyed to those actors aptly called by White (1996) 'leisured humans'. The landscape was captured in aesthetic terms:

> We walk in silence, save for the hum of an occasional bee. It's a little early in the year for the bees, but perhaps they were encouraged by the warm spring air. Retired gold miner Zeno

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[65] Mixed-use refers to the coexistence of mining, small-scale agriculture and dwelling space (see also Waack 2009).

[66] Bucuium-Poeni is a village two valleys to the South of the Corna Valley.

Cornea leads me past flocks of wiry sheep tended by ageing shepherds, and beyond a crystalline lake (Roth 2002a: 26)

Later, Roth referred to the 'idyllic valley that fills our view' and added:

'Can you see the villages of Cetate and Cirnic?' asks Zeno Cornea. He directs my gaze towards *two picture postcard villages* (emphasis added).

In several interviews and articles Roth reinforced the view of the Roşia Montană landscape as a pastoral paradise depicted in stark contrast to the 'uniquely destructive proposal' of the open cast mine. In her words, the 'tailings management facility' would cover a 'sun-drenched valley dotted with haystacks.' What was at stake for her was a 'very sleepy valley, populated by farmers and people going about their own business. Beautiful place, small communities, traditional life' (Roth cited in Kingsnorth 2005: 44).

In very similar terms, Heidebroek explained the reasons for which she had decided to stay in the Apuseni Mountains, because this area seemed to her to be an 'unequally alive museum' (Heidebroek 2002):

This region, which is probably one of the last paradises in Europe, where we have wild animals, we have wolf, we have bears, extraordinary birds here, this place should be a natural park. All around the world, everybody has fell in love with this place. And everybody who comes here says "I want to have a place in that incredible paradise" (Heidebroek cited in *New Eldorado* 2004).

The notion of museum is very interesting as it reveals something of the relationship between landscape and place. In fact, research has focused on the process of *museumification* 'in which places or subjects of the everyday world are transformed in ways that can lead people to think and act toward them as if they had been placed in a museum' (Gobster 2007: 100).

What are the characteristics of this process? The notion of museum suggests, first, that the relationship is fleeting. Unlike the interaction with places, individuals come to see museums, not to

live in them indefinitely. Second, museums are expected to express the essence of a phenomenon, to capture, in a visual display, its true nature. More importantly, this essence is underscored by setting it aside from the rest, from neighbouring objects or landscapes. Third, the museum metaphor implies the separation between viewer and what is viewed. It is the typical expression of the relationship between tourists and the places they visit – the place is supposed to conform more or less to the tourist gaze and offer a relatively unambiguous message. It is true that for Heidebroek the museum was deemed alive but, one could infer, not alive enough to alter its essential nature *as* museum.

The idea that Roşia Montană was a museum shed much light on the power of the representation of this area as a pastoral paradise. Museums are essentially timeless, they express a reality which, even if historical in itself, is separated from the ongoing flow of history and preserved in a diorama. Roth's and Heidebroek's 'museum' seemed to be inhabited by timeless peasants, carrying out their timeless occupations in a timeless environment.

In a photo album published by the project opposition (the Soros Foundation), the visual representations of rurality and natural beauty at Roşia Montană complemented the verbal descriptions offered by extra-local activists (Niculae 2006). The pictures, taken by a Romanian architect living in Bucharest, showed rocky mountain peaks, forest-covered mountains, flower meadows, ponds, sunsets over the mountainous landscape, and animals grazing on the meadows. Human interventions in the landscape are mostly benign – depicted as mowed hay, orchards and meadows or remnants of pre-industrial mining activities (Pop, 2008). The pictures which captured the signs of industrial mining had captions which suggested warning or feelings of déjà vu: 'metastasis' or 'largest copper mine in Europe' (Pop 2008: 97).

The rural character of Roşia Montană was captured in a whole series of pictures which depicted local people. Pop (2008) interpreted the meaning of these pictures as follows:

> Roşia Montană's people are hardworking peasants living in harmony with nature. Nearly all of the photographs depict elderly or adult persons engaged in their daily activities in the open air. Their cloths and hands are dirty, symbolizing handwork. They practice agriculture by ancient methods, using traction animals (horses, bulls) as did their ancestors two thousand years ago (Pop 2008: 98).

As stated above, for White (1996) the distinguishing mark of the environmentalists' approach to nature is the separation of work, especially in its modern, industrial forms, from nature. Some environmentalists accepted certain kinds of work in nature, such as subsistence farming. The leisure landscape was, thus, 'populated' with humans, but only those humans that 'fit' into the pastoral picture drawn by the outside observers. These were obviously 'farmers', although applying this label to the inhabitants of Roşia Montană was anything but straightforward[67]. For Roth and Heidebroek, however, there was no question that the local opposition to the project, the NGO Alburnus Maior, 'represented the interests of 300 subsistence farmers who are opposed to the project and to forced resettlement' (Roth cited in Kocsis 2004). In an article published in *Revista 22,* a prestigious Romanian cultural magazine, Roth further claimed that those who opposed the mine were, in their majority, subsistence farmers who refused to part with their land, homes and the town itself because it was 'here that they have their roots' (Roth 2006). The roots metaphor is an appropriate word that can refer both to farming (the roots of plants) and to people (roots as tradition). The landscape and its inhabitants were, thus, inseparable:

> …this mining project of Gabriel Resources […], if realized, would destroy the way of life which made the moţi[68] [motzi – inhabitants

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[67] An informed commentator suggests that the more appropriate term for the inhabitants of Roşia Montană, especially those who lived there in the first half of the 20th century, would be "miner – farmer" (Wollmann 2008 personal communication).

[68] The inhabitants of Apuseni Mountains are usually known as moţi [read motzi]. The name has usually positive connotations.

of Apuseni Mountains] an integral part of their mountains. In this sense, their genuine paradise does not belong to anyone but to the Moți Country. It is their land, their culture, their history, and their character has been wonderfully shaped by the natural forces existing in this unique place" (Roth 2002b).

To love without knowing or to know without loving? This dilemma of contemporary activism went back at least several centuries to the encounters with the *Other* during the conquest of Mexico. At that time, in the early 16th century, the Bishop La Casas of Chiapas emerged as the defender of the Indians in apparent contrast with Cortès, the bloody conqueror. At first sight, the egalitarianism of Las Casas was very different from the racial prejudices of his opponents (especially Sepulveda, a proponent of the inferiority of Indians) (Todorov 1982, as cited in Roué 2003: 622). However, Todorov's analysis revealed a more complex picture: whereas Las Casas loved Indians more than Cortès, he had less knowledge of Indians than Cortès, while both were in agreement, at least initially, on the need for assimilating the Indians (Roué 2003: 622). Roué applied Todorov's insights to a modern environmental conflict to show how US environmentalists did not, in fact, understand the indigenous groups affected by the hydroelectric development at James Bay in arctic Quebec. Environmentalists loved the Cree but did not know them. The same seemed to be the case with Roth and the other environmentalists struggling to preserve Roșia Montană. They loved the 'farmers' who opposed the destructive mining project of Gabriel Resources without asking either if the opponents of the project were indeed farmers or if they opposed it *as farmers.*

The representation of the extra-local project opponents required that people from Roșia Montană simply *be* farmers. But did they identify as such? In a certain way, this question threw some light on the dynamic of experience-nearing and distancing between place and landscape. For Roth, the belief that the people from Roșia Montană were farmers in a rural landscape might have seemed natural enough that she appeared in front of an

audience in San Francisco, when she was awarded the Goldman environmental prize, dressed in a popular Romanian blouse. For Mitzi Cornea, an inhabitant of Roşia Montană who was also opposed to the project, the peasant status was not something that she would have readily accepted:

> See, we in this area have not been peasants, we have been gentlemen! The ladies in Rosia wore hats from Paris and, like in Paris they danced the quadrille, because at the casino here we also had a dancing school so that we (in fact our parents!) used to dance tango and all that was new in the world, [keeping with] the latest fashion. Here we had civilization, dear sir! (Mitzi Cornea, cited in Iacob, 2009).

At other times, some residents of Roşia Montană felt offended for having been considered peasants. An almost comical story involved Cezar, the late husband of Mihaela, and a former manager at the Roşia Montană state-owned mine. The story told by Mihaela went as follows: the former communist leader Ceauşescu came once to Alba Iulia and was supposed to meet there people from the Apuseni Mountains. The organizers of this event dressed Cezar and others from Roşia Montană in traditional Romanian costumes. Mihaela described with great humour the dismay felt by her husband, a miner in peasant cloths; he wanted to tear apart the picture taken on that occasion, but Mihaela managed to save it.

In fact, local histories abound in images of past wealth and urban sophistication. For example, in *The Gold and Silver of Roşia Montană*, Sîntimbrean et. al (2006), a former mining engineer at Roşia Montană, cited the historical accounts of the Austrian traveller Krichel and of the Romanian-Albanian writer Dora d'Istria[69]. Krichel travelled in 1827 – 1829 through the Apuseni Mountains and described the houses, which were 'like palaces', of some Romanians living in Roşia Montană. He wrote

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[69] Her real name was Elena Ghica and she was a member of the Romanian nobility, who later became the Duchess Helena Koltsova-Massalskaya. As writer, she took the pseudonym Dora d'Istria (http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Elena_Ghica)

that the 'first beautiful house, built in a remarkable style, belonged to Gritta Gheorghiuț, mine owner in the area.' Krichel also mentioned Barbura Samoilă in whose house 'no prince would have been ashamed to live' (Sîntimbrean et al 2006: 99).

More importantly, even local opponents[70] of the new mine point out the importance of the mining history of Roşia Montană. When asked 'what is the most important thing that anyone inquiring about Roşia Montană should know?' Gloria, a resident of Roşia Montană, provided the following answer: '[Roşia Montană] is a commune in which mining has been carried out for hundreds or even thousands of years; historic area, quiet….'. Stelian, living in the central square of Roşia Montană, answered the same question as follows:

> To a large extent, they are interested in the place for this gold. It is a pity not to see what is here. Many people are interested. Underneath our feet there is gold, I know this mountain from side to side. [It is] a gold-bearing area, everything means gold. The buildings were not made without gold.

When asked the same question, Mihai, a resident of Roşia Montană and member of AM stated that:

> M: The first thing that they should know is the occupation of the locals, their former occupation and their current one. [...] Or, their source of livelihood until now and in the future.
> F: Can you explain a bit?
> M: Until now…, we should not fool ourselves, because this is the truth, 80% of the locals lived off mining. That was it. And the rest… from agriculture, there were the local office workers, and that's pretty much it. But 80%…, that was it.

Elisabeta, a resident of Bucium village and a vehement critic of the RMGC project thought that the most important thing that someone should know was that:

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[70] In this case, the opponents of the proposed mine were identified because they agreed with the following statement from the semi-structured interview "I have not sold and I will not sell my property" [to RMGC]. Others are members of Alburnus Maior.

> .... Roşia Montană is a historic place, with a rich gold deposit, towered over the centuries by Dacian and Roman fortresses. The gold in Roşia Montană has been exploited by all inhabitants of the area: Bucium, Roşia Montană, Corna.

In a slightly different context, even before being asked the question above, Adrian began his story about Roşia Montană and the mining project by saying that he was born in a local family, a family of miners. Adrian was a local representative of AM. His father, Adrian continued, died in a mine accident when he [the father] was 33 years old. Adrian graduated from the electro-technical high school and worked in mining from 19 to 41 years of age, after having completed a geology course in Deva. Then he added: 'we are not peasants, we are more polished'.

Against this backdrop of certain local sentiments, the generalized view that the inhabitants of Roşia Montană *have to be* peasants is increasingly striking. Franco Petri of Greenpeace Vienna decried the fact that 2000 people will have to be resettled to make way for the project: 'many are farmers whose sole occupation is agriculture and they refuse to leave their lands.' (cited in Popescu 2002d). In a short letter published in the London edition of *the Times* (October 29, 2002), British archaeologist John Nandris similarly pointed out 'the forced relocation of over 2,000 people including those from 740 subsistence farms.' The *No dirty Gold* campaign organized by the anti-mining NGO Earthworks (2005), presented the statement of Stephanie Roth whom they described as the representative of 'a community group of farmers and property owners in Roşia Montană'. The *Mines and Communities* website also mentioned 'subsistence farmers' in connection with Roşia Montană but acknowledged that 'many have also worked in the mining sector.'

It appeared that it was not the availability of 'local' information but rather ideological preferences that led experience-distant observers to repeatedly return to the 'peasant' trope. This is especially clear from the accounts of several Romanian journalists from *Formula As* who have visited Roşia

Montană several times. In a number of articles they described the mining history and several individual biographies of former miners living in Roşia Montană. Still, they used the term peasant as a point of contrast with the 'modern', for example Lupescu (2004) observed during one of his visits that there are fewer peasants and more cars in Roşia Montană. At other times they used the term as a synonym for local naivety in contrast to the cunning plans of the company; Turcanu (2002a) described the self-confident attitude of one director of the company against a 'disorganized mass of stupid peasants'. In still other cases, being a peasant meant being deferent to authority (Turcanu 2002b).

Some might argue that the use of the word peasant instead of 'miner-peasant' is of only circumstantial importance. My argument is that there is more to this framing of the local inhabitants of Roşia Montană as 'peasants'. Why? First, because the pastoral landscape of Roşia Montană is an imaginary landscape created through an imagined history. Cezara reinforced this view in an interview in which she was asked about how locals of two or three generations ago earned their livelihoods.

> And so, if we are to talk about how people lived when they had access to their resources, they were able to make a very prosperous life out of it and, naturally because the people were thinking in the long term. They were very good in managing their resources, because they needed the surface for their animals and for their livelihoods and they wanted to have the gold as a secondary and important income source, because gold is a precious metal.

The discourses on the leisure landscape, however, seemed to be oblivious to these historical 'details'. How can this be explained? One of the main reasons comes from the very fact that the proponents of this view are extra-local or, better yet, translocal actors. The success of the Roşia Montană 'cause' was due, at least in part, to the ability of the mine opponents to mobilize transnational networks of activists (Ban and Romanţan 2008). At a minimum, such networks needed some form of *common* representation of the landscapes (including their human

inhabitants) which they struggled to defend. For example, an account of a protest of an 'international delegation' at the Newmont AGM (2005) 'highlighted the hardships faced by hundreds of farmers in Roșia Montană, Romania, and villagers in the Ahafo region of Ghana, who were being displaced from their homes to make way for large, industrial gold mines owned by Newmont and its partners'. What did Roșia Montană and Ahafo had in common and how could they be brought to a common denominator? All the evidence above suggested that this has happened in the early years of the Roșia Montană conflict through a process of distancing and abstraction. To counterbalance this admittedly critical interpretation of the making of place by the project opponents, I now turn to the experience-distancing pursued by the mining company.

The Industrial Landscape: 'Sterilizing' History and Displacing People

In constructing the industrial landscape at Roșia Montană for its new project, the mining company had to deal with several obstacles that stood in the way of its experience-distancing efforts. Put in a nutshell, the two obstacles were: history and people. History refered to all the artefacts left behind by almost nineteen centuries of mining operations and included the pre-Roman, Roman, medieval and modern mining galleries[71], burial sites and a Roman mausoleum as well as a large number of historic buildings including five churches in the Roșia Montană valley and two in the Corna valley. On the other hand, 'people' refered to the properties owned by the residents of the Roșia Montană commune and a small fraction of those from the town of Abrud.

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[71] The archeological team commissioned by RMGC explored over 70 km of galleries, of which 7 km were classified as ancient (before 300 A.D.) and 20 km as "modern" (between 1600-1900 A.D.) (RMGC Cultural Heritage Baseline Report 2006c: 83 – 5).

The language used by the mining company to engage with these obstacles and the problem of their removal is worth analysing both for the meanings that it discloses about the construction of an industrial landscape and shifts in these meanings over time.

In April 2001, GR announced its shareholders that the local council of Roşia Montană had approved a land use plan which 'ha[s] rezoned, for industrial purposes, all land within the Roşia Montană borough that will be required for the development [...] of a large scale open pit mining operation' (GR PR April 25, 2001). Soon after that, the company announced that, after receiving an additional private placement (of $10 M) it will proceed, among other steps, with the 'archaeological sterilization' of the area. What does sterilization mean? In an earlier press release, GR stated that the approval to advance with the project will require that 'buildings and dwellings of interest be catalogued, described and photographed and some relocated, while sites of archaeological interest be excavated, catalogued, described and any articles found which are of interest, be removed' (GR PR October 19, 2000). However, the term sterilization was used, in fact, in its proper sense (that is to 'render (land) unfruitful'[72] for any possible future uses) because the review of archaeological sites and historic buildings was 'not designed to preclude or prevent the development of a new mine at Roşia Montană' (GR PR April 10, 2000).

Soon afterwards, in October 2001, GR started to use the less harsh term 'archaeological discharge' to refer to the management of historic artefacts in the development of the Roşia Montană project. 'Sterilization', as a term for dealing with the archaeological 'obstacle' was dropped since 2001, for obvious reasons, and did not show up in the press releases since then. However, the aim of 'discharging' the archaeological and historic landscape of any remains that could obstruct the development of the mining project was essentially the same as that of 'sterilizing'

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[72] http://www.answers.com/topic/sterilize

it. This is because GR undertook a program of archaeological investigations, starting in early 2001, with the aim 'to confirm that the site can be used for purposes of the development of a new large scale open pit mine' (GR PR October 17, 2002). In other words, confirmation preceded rather than followed the archaeological exploration, which extended at least until early 2004 (GR PR February 24, 2004). Archaeological discharge was the legally accepted term that was used since 2001.

However, in 2007, at the height of the permitting process, there occurred a new discursive shift. During 2007, the Technical Analysis Committee (TAC), a panel appointed by the government of Romania, was making strides in reviewing the project's EIA. The new term that began to be used, albeit briefly, was that of 'rescue': 'We have spent more than US$10 million sponsoring a program of archaeology rescue to recover and document the remaining evidence which would otherwise have been lost or remained inaccessible for all time' (May 7, 2007). In order to emphasize the importance of the archaeological research and rescue done by the company, the project developers claimed even that 'the project [would] rescue and preserve Romania's cultural patrimony.' (September 27, 2007). The conceptual distance between 'sterilization' and 'rescue' was covered by many struggles over the utilization of the landscape of Roşia Montană, struggles waged primarily with those advocating the preservation of Roşia Montană as a large-scale museum.

One of the most visible and controversial activities of GR at Roşia Montană has been the acquisition of properties located within the project footprint. For the large-scale exploitation of the ores, it needed to relocate almost 1000 households from the commune of Roşia Montană. The company used both pressure tactics and inducements to convince people to part with their properties. The pressure tactics involved several actions.

First, the company announced in April 2001 that the local council of Roşia Montană had issued a revised Land Use Plan that 'incorporates the relocation and resettlement of all areas

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affected by the development of a new mine' (GR PR April 25, 2001). The mining company prepared several resettlement and relocation action plans (RRAP) in 2002, 2003 and 2006 (RMGC 2006a). In its latest and most complete version, the RRAP stated its principles of land acquisition as follows:

> RMGC has decided not to use expropriation as it must be up to the community to determine if they want the project. Instead, RMGC considers real estate transactions between willing sellers and willing buyers to be the first choice option, though expropriation might be considered in the future as a last resort in situations where no amicable agreement can be reached (RMGC 2006a: 35).

The opening part of the statement was meant to sound reassuring, in that the mining company would respect the wishes of the Roșia Montană residents with regard to their relocation. It also explicitly stated that it was using a willing buyer – willing seller approach to acquire properties. There were, however, two contradictory issues in this relocation plan that need to be singled out as experience-distancing strategies. The first started from the ambiguity of the community concept invoked in the first sentence of the quote above. The 'community' was to decide whether it accepted the project, but if the community or, one might assume, some of its members find themselves in situations 'where no amicable agreement can be reached', they can be expropriated. The concern for the community's interests thus appeared to be superficial at best, and misleading at worst, since the interests of the mining venture might have imposed expropriation to acquire surface rights, whenever 'no amicable agreement can be reached'.

Second, the RRAP (RMGC 2006a) invoked the World Bank Group's Operational Directive on Involuntary Resettlement (OD 4.30), to justify and legalize these acquisitions, although the company never had a legal mandate to expropriate property owners from Roșia Montană . OD 4.30 provided a list of criteria for resettlement, such as compensation paid at full replacement cost prior to the actual move, assistance with relocation, and help with integration into the host community (RMGC 2006a).

The RRAP also included a list of compensation rates for various human-made or natural structures. For example, houses were to be compensated for depending on their structures with rates ranging from 195 euros per square meter (wooden structures) to 375 euros pe sq. m. (for villa types structures with two floors) (RMGC 2006a). These approaches created a standard price for each house considered at replacement value. Calculating prices in this way, coupled with the statement that the resettlement was involuntary meant, in effect, that the residents were presented with a set price for their properties, thus limiting the action space of 'willing sellers'. In an unconstrained context, the seller would not be compelled to accept a given price constructed via external standards (those of the World Bank). That this was not the outcome, at least in some cases (as detailed in chapter seven), does not mean that the mining company did not try to distance the issue of property acquisition from their immediate, negotiable context. The experience-distant OD 4.30 was thus used as a tactic to discipline local expectations and interests in what had become a free-floating place.

Third, there was the suggestion that the project was inevitable, so that people would be forced to sell their properties sooner or later. For this aim, the mining company organized focus groups in which participants were to 'discuss and agree on livelihood and coping strategies of affected households' (RMGC 2006a: 18). This appeared to convey to the residents of Roşia Montană the suggestion that, since they had to leave anyway, or 'be affected' in the language of the developers, they would better cope with and adapt to the inevitable situation. This impression was conveyed by an informal discussion with Mihaela, who resided very close to one of the pits. She recalled how one of RMGC's negotiators told her and her husband that they are free to stay if they want, but in such case the company needed to build a fence to keep them safe from falling rocks. This was an obvious irony since the company planned to mine several tens of thousands of tons of ore each day (RMGC 2006b).

Fourth, the company seemed to have tried to undermine some of the public services to compel the residents to opt for leaving Roşia Montană. For example, the local doctor was apparently bribed by the mining company to leave RM (Popescu 2003), while police officers tried to intimidate foreign journalists and activists (*EVZ*, July 16, 2002). The water supply also experienced discontinuities which I noticed myself during my research stays in 2007 and 2008.

The acquisition of properties and the displacement was one of the most thorough experience-distancing approaches undertaken by the mining company. It contributed the most to changes in experience of place as people left their homes, gardens, courtyards but also their families and neighbours. As profound as this distancing might have been, it was never as complete as the developers intended it. As will be shown in the next chapter, experience-distancing can be a radical and painful process for those undergoing it. However, there is often space for undoing some of the consequences of experience-distancing through various paths of experience-nearing. The next chapter will focus on such processes.

Chapter Seven   Location, Landscape, Community and Livelihoods: Experience-Nearing Processes

This chapter is devoted to the implications of the internal loosening of places and how this process was experienced by the local population. There is no single metric to assess the degree to which a place has experienced a loosening of its internal structure but one can gain a relatively thorough understanding of the internal dynamic of a free-floating place by looking at a few key elements. These elements of local experience cluster around four main themes: risk, opportunity, surprise and paradox. They all pertain to the lives and livelihoods of various groups and individuals who lived in Roşia Montană or have lived there before the arrival of the mining company. The analysis below is based on analysing the responses of 37 residents and former residents of Roşia Montană.

Uncertainty in a Free-floating, Globalized Place

The risk concept used in this book is similar to the one proposed by Jaeger et al. (2001: 17): Risk is a 'situation or event in which something of human value […] has been put at stake and where the outcome is uncertain'. The residents of Roşia Montană invoked a variety of things they valued which had been put at stake. Two questions were used to assess the risks experienced by the residents of Roşia Montană commune and of the nearby

areas. The first asked respondents if there is anything in their future that they view as unsettling or troubling while the second asked them to explain what the word 'risk' meant to them[73]. Uncertainty was the defining feature of most answers provided by the respondents. Both risk and uncertainty were invoked in personal, experience-near, terms, and could be seen as blurring the choices that an individual can make. The choices themselves were, from an experience-distant point of view, straightforward: the residents whose properties were needed for the development of the RMGC mining project could either sell their properties to the company and leave or refuse to leave and resist the offers and pressures made by the company. In a free-floating place, however, these seemingly simple choices assumed a high degree of complexity. Furthermore, risks did not affect the local population uniformly but sometimes made way for new opportunities which were eagerly seized by astute local actors. In most cases, risk and opportunity seemed to coexist in various *unstable* configurations, while the general conditions of uncertainty surrounding the fate of the mining project made it very hard to predict which would prevail. This section will discuss the issue of risks and opportunities and the many shades in-between, as seen by local actors who were situated at different points on the resistance – resettlement continuum.

Tibor was a resident of Corna village whose land had been earmarked for acquisition by the mining company. He agreed to sell his property to RMGC for a good price and was interested in moving to Recea/Dealul Furcilor, the new quarter built by the company on the outskirts of Alba Iulia, the capital city of Alba county. When asked what unsettled him about his future he replied: 'this state of uncertainty! They promised that they will let the [company] exploit [the gold deposit]'. He was determined to

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[73] See Lupton and Tulloch (2003). These broad questions aimed to capture the whole diversity of risk definitions and representations, without constraining the answers to any predefined categories of social risks, environmental risk perceived in relation to the RMGC project.

leave and from his point of view risk meant 'not doing anything. It is the risk of not having future perspectives and staying where you are. This is also a risk.'[74] He was quite aware of the debates about the risks of the mining project, but he dismissed 'the risk of pollution' because, in his view, this risk was 'monitored' and therefore unproblematic. Being asked about 'the problem' at Roşia Montană, Tibor did not hesitate in saying 'workplaces'. Then, again, he downplayed possible environmental concerns: 'the mountains will move if they are to move, and grass will still grow on them'. For him, risk meant stopping what had begun [i.e. the development of the new mine] and the fear that they would have to 'ask for mercy' if the mining company left and the area would be left with no employment opportunities.

Things looked quite different for Sergiu, a resident of Bălmoşeşti, which was a relatively isolated hamlet of the Roşia Montană commune. Sergiu had already sold his property to RMGC. He claimed that the value of the compensation had increased compared to the time when he sold his house and land and that he will be left with little money after RMGC builds his new house at the resettlement site of Piatra Albă. In contrast to Tibor, who was a late seller, he had to forego the opportunity of a 'good price' for his property. Even the decision to sell his property had been anything but an easy choice. He explained, with tears in his eyes: 'You have my word that I cried with my wife at night, it was very difficult to make a decision, you don't know where to go, you don't know anyone.' When asked about what risk meant to him, he considered the environmental risks of the RMGC project as the most worrisome: 'Risk is when you are unsure about the mining project. If they use cyanide, a disaster may follow. Anything is possible. As it happened in [2000] at Baia Mare, on the Tisa. Then, there is also the risk of being left without a home.' The latter risk would have seemed exaggerated, since the mining company had already paid compensation and claimed that it would use part

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[74] Even if actual quotes from the interviews are used, the order of the sentences within the quoted material might be changed.

of the amount due to each owner to build the two resettlement sites. Time proved Sergiu right, however, as the Piatra Alba site had not been built more than ten years later (by early 2020).

RMGC had acquired properties between 2002 and 2008 but it was only in May 2009 that it completed the resettlement site at Recea/Dealul Furcilor. These significant time lags, in which residents who had sold their properties were unsure when and how they will end up at their new 'home', have augmented the uncertainty experienced by the locals. Gabriel, a resident of Roşia Montană whose property had already been purchased by RMGC by May 2007 but who continued to stay in his 'old' house, stated that the most important thing that anyone inquiring about Roşia Montană should know is 'uncertainty, at the moment' Asked if he would advise a friend or relative to come to Roşia Montană he answered that it is better for them to stay where they are because 'things are uncertain here'. Oana, an old resident of the Bunta hamlet in Roșia Montană expected a purchase offer from RMGC but this did not prevent her from being fearsome about the future: 'The [company] worries me because they want me to leave and they also want to leave – and I don't know what to believe.' Not knowing what to believe is for some locals a major source of stress. Petra of Gura Cornei explained how her life has changed after the arrival of RMGC: 'I am stressed all the time. Now they say that they [company] are about to leave and the poor people hurry to get money [for their properties, before the company withdraws]. Then… they [say they] are not leaving anymore.' Mihnea, a resident of Corna, added along the same lines, that the arrival of the company had not changed his life because he had 'not worked for RMGC, he had not had any benefits and he had not sold yet.' However, in some ways they have stressed him: 'it is a bit of stress. You see one neighbour leaving, then another….and you ask yourself: what is going to happen?' Finally, for Iulia from Roşia Montană, risk meant that you get the money for compensation and leave, but 'you don't know where you are going and what you are

getting.' This stood in contrast with the situation before the movement, when the respondent claimed that she had 'everything she needed [in terms of utilities] and leaving to another place could bring problems if she trespassed the property of someone else'. If she moved to an apartment building, 'no wall [would] belong to you anymore'. Her interactions with the company's 'negotiators' [those in charge of property acquisitions] took place on civilized terms even if her answer to their offers was 'no', at least 'for the moment' [as of July 2007]. But uncertainty lingered: every time the negotiators showed up, her little grandchild cried out: 'Grandma is becoming a house seller!'

Ionuţ, the local doctor, a young man from Alba Iulia who began his medical career in Roşia Montană in the early 2000s, summed up the source of these manifold uncertainties as follows:

> At Roşia Montană, they should have either issued the environmental permit and the company would have purchased the houses, people would have left and they would have begun the exploitation or they should have prohibited any activity of 'Gabriel' and that was it. Because there is *complete uncertainty…* [One day] they approve the zoning urbanism plan, for example. The company moves ahead and acquires 2, 3, 5 or 10 more houses. Then, [the next day] they say: 'It's over now, the company does not make any more purchases.' The one who has not sold his house yesterday hurries to sell: 'come on, give me the money before you leave, otherwise I will be left without neighbours' (emphasis added) (2006).

This quote showed quite clearly how the political economic uncertainties of a free-floating place translated into the direct experiences of those involved. The random walk of project advancements and setbacks produced a variety of insecurities on the ground that appeared to only be visible from up close. Residents had to contend not only with the uncertainty of having to resettle to unknown places but also with the insecurity of staying in place: your neighbours could depart or change, your daily routines could be disrupted or you would be compelled to make hasty decisions. This was one of the main symptoms of experiencing life in a globalized place.

The Creation of New Geographies of Risks

In the section above I have described the uncertainties and risks confronting some of those whose properties were, from the point of view of the company, eligible for compensation. There was, however, a more complex geography of risk that structured residents' responses to risk. Those living in the Vârtop valley, which runs roughly parallel to the Roşia Montană valley, were not eligible for compensation although they lived in close proximity to the future project footprint. Cristian, a pensioner from Vârtop, a village located along the homonym valley, expressed some regret that they were not included in the area eligible for compensation because the company paid 'decently'. With the compensation received, 'each of us would have done as he pleases.' Titus saw the problem of not being eligible for compensation in more pessimistic terms. He claimd that his life has changed for the worse after RMGC came to Roşia Montană and his thoughts always came back to the idea that he would not be able to live here because 'nobody wants to buy our land'. When asked if the company's experts knew the risks of the project, his answer suggested that he was concerned about the spatial reach of the risks: 'They said that they need to get people out over [an area of] 50 km. Now, they have not even moved them out within 15 km.' Both Cristian and Titus were concerned about the use of cyanide. Titus probably expressed a more general sentiment among some people of Vârtop when he claimed that 'everybody is afraid of pollution: As it happened with the Russians, at Chernobyl, affected for 40 years. They [RMGC] leave, the cyanide stays behind.' Laura, a young mother of a child who had undergone major surgery, made the link between compensation and risks more explicit. For her, as a resident of Vârtop, 'the problem' in the case of Roşia Montană was that 'people are discontented because they need money to leave and not be polluted. Everybody would be happy if they would compensate'. On the question of what risk meant to her she stated

without hesitation: 'the company stays a few years and leaves. We remain without jobs and polluted.'

But this had not always been the case. In the early years of the project, some residents had 'hopes that this will be a long-term project. At least one generation of young people should have retired from here....' said Tudor, a well-off resident of Vârtop. Elisabeta, a former teacher and school head in Bucium, just south of the Corna valley, also mentioned that 'many people had put all their hope in the company, [saying] that this will bring happiness.' However, she added, 'under the guise of the promised workplaces, we will be impoverished from a material, a historical and a spiritual point of view.'

To conclude, for some of the residents of the valleys adjacent to the project footprint, the problem was not that of venturing into unknown waters, if they were to move out of Roşia Montană, but rather that of being forced to endure the uncertainties of a project brought 'under their nose' (Elisabeta, Bucium). Gheorghe, a resident of Abrud, the town in close proximity to the project footprint [less than 2 km], had sold one of his properties to RMGC and his son worked for the company. He was thus far from being an outspoken opponent of the mining project. However, when asked about who should decide the faith of the project, he seemed concerned about the micro-geography of the risks and benefits brought by the project: 'the inhabitants of the area and those of the *adjacent areas*. [In fact] Abrud is much more affected than Roşia Montană – they leave, but we stay here.'[75] (emphasis added). These can be said to be the invisible victims of the RMCG project, rendered immobile by the very mobility of venture capital.

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[75] His house in Abrud is not eligible for compensation.

Following the Pathways of Risks and Opportunities

A free-floating, globalized place is not necessarily a place of doom. It is a place of fragmentation, marked by contrasting pathways and aspirations, but not one in which the future is uniformly bleak. Not everyone from Roşia Montană had qualms about risks and uncertainties or, to put it more precisely, *not anymore*. Among those who had sold their properties and had moved away from Roşia Montană, one could see how risks have been transformed into benefits. Emilia had sold her property and moved to the town of Câmpeni, where she seemed to enjoy a comfortable life[76]. When asked about the meaning of risk, she answered: „I guess we took a risk by moving here. But our risking worked out well.... it was a *favourable risk*' (emphasis added). Dumitru and his wife were the first to be relocated from Roşia Montană in 2002 and they also acknowledged that 'we took a risk'. They agreed to receive from RMGC a pre-purchase bonus of 3% of the value of their property but they were met with 'hate' by their townspeople and had to contend with rumours that the 3% will be all they will ever get for their house and land. But this turned out not to be true and, in the end, 'our family was happy'. With the compensation received they 'bought an apartment for our daughter, a house for us [near Alba Iulia] and a car for our son.'[77]

Other early relocates, Ștefania and her husband Cătălin recounted how they stayed for two weeks with 'half a house purchased in Alba Iulia and another half still [not sold] in Roşia Montană'. But now they seemed pleased with their new property. In such cases moving out of Roşia Montană, often times as far as

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[76] Before the interview, the respondent was found on the terrace of her newly acquired property, smoking and chatting with a neighbour. She enjoys a high income and wore quite a bit of jewellery. She was very relaxed during the interview and explained that she is used to being interviewed and that her daughter is a student in sociology in Alba Iulia.

[77] Based on the respondents' account, the compensation received from RMGC seemed to be above the "replacement value" prescribed by World Bank guidelines (RRAP 2003: 5).

Alba Iulia, had meant leaving behind the uncertainties of living in a free-floating place.

In other cases, however, seeking opportunities and 'taking risks for a better life' (Anita, resident of Roşia Montană and employee of RMGC) had not been restricted to those who had left Roşia Montană. In fact, residents of Roşia Montană had sometimes attracted the irony of the Romanian press given their eagerness to 'exploit' the mining company. They had been called 'the billionaires of Roşia Montană'[78]. Below is a description from a Romanian national daily, which the reader should obviously take with a grain of salt:

> In order to squeeze the largest possible amounts from the Roşia Montană Gold Corporation, which wants to exploit gold using cyanide, the locals have planted fruit trees for which [the company] has paid handsomely and they have built cottages for which they have received as much as for villas (*Jurnalul National* July 12, 2008).

Matei was a successful businessman from Roşia Montană and the representative of the NGO 'Pro Justice' which supported the RMGC project. He was born and raised in Roşia Montană and was the great grandson of a merchant who produced wine in the area of Blaj and sold it to the miners of Roşia Montană.

His ancestor eventually married a woman from Roşia Montană and bought mine shares there. It seemed that the entrepreneurial spirit has somehow survived although Matei had never worked in the mines. He had worked as a driver and owned at the time of the interview a construction company which had subcontracted by RMGC. Among others, he had built the access road to one of the resettlement sites. Matei had erected no less than four two-storey apartment buildings on his property although the general urbanism plan (PUG) prohibited any new structures which were not compatible with the mining project. But he was not the only one who had sought to capitalize on the

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[78] In 2002/2003, when the relocation began, one billion lei was the equivalent of about $30.000 USD.

presence of RMGC. Dorin from the NGO which opposed the project, claimed that there were no less than 200 wooden cottages, with no foundation, built in 2006 - 2007 in the Roşia Montană and Corna valleys (Gavriliu, 2007 and Figure 7.1).

Figure 7. 1: **New structures mushroomed during the 'cottage frenzy' ('cabaniada') of Roşia Montană (2006 – 2007), erected by residents interested in obtaining additional compensation from RMGC, despite a construction ban in the area.**

Source: personal archive of the author.

In more or less veiled terms, some residents claimed that they expected additional compensation for these buildings. Why did they have no foundation? According to local sources, lacking foundation meant that they did not require any building authorization. In this way, the wooden cottages, sometimes even in a rough state, represented opportunities for profitable real estate transactions. Vasile, a resident of Corna, claimed that he had already sold a cottage and a piece of land to RMGC and with the compensation received for them had bought an apartment in Alba Iulia. His family had not sold their 'old house' yet [2007] and his father expected an offer from the company. In other cases, some of the residents who had already sold their properties to RMGC had formed 'joint-ventures' with those still owning property in Roșia Montană by investing in such wooden cottages in hopes of receiving additional compensation for these new properties. For example, Mihaela and Nicoleta, two long-time friends from the village of Roșia Montană had jointly paid for such a cottage.

It should be emphasized, however, that even if large compensations appeared as benefits at first sight, in certain cases they may turn out to be sources of risks. The following case draws from a mini-focus group discussion with three members of one RMGC department[79]. Cristina said that she knew about the case of an old lady, living alone, who received 8 billion lei [approx. \$320,000 USD[80]] for her property. As employees familiar with the fate of the people who were to be resettled, she and her colleagues pointed out that this large amount was anything but a benefit. 'She did not know what [this amount meant] and what she should do with them' Cristina said. Andrada added that the old lady just 'wanted to live in her little

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[79] The respondents, employees of RMGC, were soon to be laid off at the time of the interview, as part of the restructuring of the mining company in early 2008. Therefore, there might be a small dose of resentment in their statements against the company. However, the comments to be presented here seem to be fairly neutral.

[80] Calculated for an exchange rate of 25.000 lei for 1 USD (February 2008).

house and die there in peace and not be disturbed by anyone.' What could disturb her peace? Cristina explained that old people 'were an easy prey because they [discovered they] have so many relatives after they sold their property...they never knew about before. [They were] harassed.' She asked, rhetorically, what good does it do that she [then] has 8 billion in her account if she 'has lost her peace and she is always cornered and soon she [will pass away] and what is left will be taken care of by some 'do-gooders'... But it's their life's work that they cannot enjoy'.

These respondents noted an irony, namely that older people got larger compensations than younger ones. However, it was the latter who are more likely to have families with children or were able to invest, thus being able to draw a larger benefit from the compensation received.

If some respondents had managed to advance their entrepreneurial or real estate interests by trying to take advantage of the company's drive to acquire as many properties as possible, others had capitalized on their relations with powerful institutional opponents of the mine. One such opponent was a fairly large transnational foundation founded by billionaire and philanthropist George Soros. Iulian and Adrian were among the representatives of the Soros Foundation, which had opened an 'information centre' in Roşia Montană in June 2007. Adrian had adapted and rented a room in his house for the Soros Foundation, located in the central square of Roşia Montană, and together with Iulian acted as the local informers of the foundation on the risks of the RMGC project and on alternative development strategies. Officially, this centre was meant to be the alternative voice, in addition to the information centre of the company. In addition to possible paid employment offered to Iulian and the rent paid to Adrian, the Soros foundation had offered small grants (one of them to the NGO Alburnus Maior in 2006) and courses for local residents in the areas of heritage conservation and cultural tourism. Other opponents of the mine, notably Dorin and Iulian, had boosted their social and cultural

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capital by acting as local hosts for international events (e.g. the 'First symposium of monumental sculpture' held in Roşia Montană in August – September 2006[81]) or by receiving the moral endorsement of celebrities such as actress Vanessa Redgrave. On the other hand, international activists had advanced their careers by becoming involved in the struggle over Roşia Montană. Former campaigns editor of *the Ecologist,* Stephanie Roth, had received the Goldman environmental prize in 2005, the equivalent Nobel Prize of environmental grassroots activism (*Financial Post,* December 20, 2006).

For all their differences, these actors appropriated place for their own ends, which could be instrumental or ideal. All these different individual trajectories had, in turn, engendered a changed sense of place. For some, the place had come to resemble a form of confinement devoid of opportunities, while for others it had become a springboard for socio-economic advancement. Each strategy engendered a form of experience-nearing, that is a mobilization of local experiences and local histories and geographies with the aim of challenging dominant rationalizations (Alexandrescu and Baldus 2017).

Surprise and Paradox at Roşia Montană

The alacrity of some locals to benefit from and even exploit the property acquisition plan of RMGC might have seemed striking to an outsider and even to some locals themselves[82]. A possible explanation for this behaviour may be the feeling of uncertainty experienced by most residents. The RMGC project was largely advertised in terms of the workplaces that it would create.

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[81] Details available at: http://simpozionrosiamontana.ro/fr
[82] At a public meeting in December 2007, when the company announced that it will soon suspend the property acquisition program and will lay-off two thirds of its local workforce, a local participant accused his townspeople: 'You are too greedy, this is the truth. I think many could not sell because of their greed.'

However, during the field research in Roșia Montană I discovered that very few people actually pinned their hopes on the promised workplaces: out of thirty respondents of working age interviewed in 2007, only *three* mentioned that they could personally benefit from the new jobs created by the future mine. The compensation received for the properties – which should be as large as possible - seemed to be a much more tangible benefit than the workplaces promised by the company. In fact, the latter would be created only *if* the mining project were approved. Maybe some of the wisdom that those who benefitted most from the California gold rush of the mid-1800s where not the miners digging for gold but those who sold them shovels, applied here as well.

However, finding punctual explanations such as this may be of little use in bringing to light the internal dynamics of a free-floating place. The language of risks and benefits might itself be limited in accounting for the interactions between local actors and extra-local agents. The distinction between experience-nearing and experience-distancing views and experiences is useful because it problematizes the relationship between the points of view of local vs. extra-local actors. Risk/ benefit and uncertainty assume some level of convergence between experience-nearing and experience-distancing. For example, when the researcher asked respondents about 'risk', he assumed that this word had a roughly similar meaning for lay people as it did for sociologists. But this might not have been necessarily the case. When the experience-near and the experience-distant viewpoints do not overlap neatly one may speak of 'surprise' and 'paradox'. I choose to apply the label 'surprise' to those cases in which local actors behaved in unexpected (or little expected) ways, from the perspective of extra-local actors. Analogously, 'paradox' refers to situations in which local actors were puzzled by decisions or actions undertaken by extra-local actors. In short, if risks and benefits presuppose convergence between experience-nearness and experience-distance, surprise and paradox signal cleavages between the two levels of experience.

The first surprise emerged in the early stages of the preparations for the RMGC project. In 2000, RMGC commissioned Planning Alliance, a Canadian community planning company, to develop the relocation plan for the inhabitants of Roşia Montană. Anna Dunets, the project director of Planning Alliance, recalled the first peculiarity they encountered in dealing with the people of Roşia Montană:

> It is different from other mining areas I have worked in. [...] We are accustomed to going into a community... [to find] a shared history and leaders. We did surveys and questionnaires designed to see who people trusted in the villages. And the overwhelming answer was 'no one' (Dunets cited in McAleer 2001: 16 – 17).

The second surprise for the community planning experts followed soon thereafter:

> However, even as Planning Alliance has gained villagers' trust and started negotiations, it has met with surprises. In spite of their insistence that they be dealt with individually, villagers have shown an unusual interest in what their neighbours might gain from the relocation. Some of the better-off residents were worried they would lose face if poorer people received the same kind of house as they did.

It seemed that both these surprises stemmed from the assumption that the local community at Roşia Montană necessarily displayed Gemeinschafts-like features or those characterising Durkheim's mechanical solidarity: individuals were more or less alike in lifestyles and values, all of which could be characterized as 'simple' and 'rural'. In contrast, the mining company was 'modern', 'technologically advanced' and 'rich'. This view, espoused, among others, in the documentary *Mine your own business* (Phelim McAleer and Ann McElhinney 2006), was clearly out of touch with reality. It failed to take into account the extent to which local people refashioned their opportunities for action in terms of two key resources. These resources, identified by Zsuzsa Gille (2000) in an insightful study of how multinational capital and greens vied for the allegiance of the residents of a Hungarian village are: a powerful sense of local history and the immediate connections between localities and global forces (Gille 2000: 261).

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On my first visit to Roşia Montană in 2005, I was taken by my host, Mihaela and her son Horea, to one of the cemeteries of Roşia Montană, where her husband was buried. They directed my attention to the funerary images of those who passed away: they did not wear traditional popular costumes, they contended, but rather blazers and bow ties. And the gravestones were made of black marble rather than cement (see Figure 7.2).

When asked what is the most important thing that someone inquiring about Roşia Montană should know, Mihaela, who came to Roşia Montană in her youth and was almost seventy at the time of the interview, replied:

> They should know that people are different from those elsewhere. I was impressed by their level of education. When the company came [to Roşia Montană] they thought that this is like any other commune. [Her husband] told them: 'we are civilized people.' Her father in law wore fine cloths and varnished boots. Life was civilized, similar to that in Austria. The plum trees were also brought from Austria, you could not find them in other areas [of Romania].

Figure 7. 2: **Funerary stone from the graveyard of the St. Ladislau church, Roșia Montană (2005)**

Source: The authors personal archive

The memory of the bow ties might have been re-activated by some locals who claimed for their properties 'very high prices'[83] like Stelian, aged 67. He had always argued that they [people from Rosia] should not allow themselves to be moved around by others *at their will*' [emphasis added]. But if he were to accept any sort of compensation, 'they should give us enough so that my children can wear ties their whole lives.' Along the same lines, Monica (retired since 1971), another opponent of the project, recounted a dialogue with a staff member of Gabriel Resources, an expatriate from Australia in the late 1990s:

> Monica: Do you have a house in Australia?
> Staff member: Yes
> Monica: If I would come to you to get you out of the house, would you leave?
> Staff member: I would never leave. People here are stupid that they accept such small compensations. They should take as much so that five generations can live off that money.

Liviu, a former director of the state-owned mining company, explained what the company had '*failed to understand*' when it came to Roşia Montană. Why was it, he asked, that those people who are not against the mining project, that is who do not endorse the views of Alburnus Maior, do not actually *support* the project? The answer, he claimed, was that people there had a certain kind of pride, 'passed on from generation to generation. Gold gave them a certain power in history, and a given force….'. They might benefit from the new mining project, Liviu contended, but this did not mean that they had to 'cheer' in favour of the project. They were silent, and mostly unseen in the conflict, but they expected that the company 'did its job' and develop the project. It was the company's obligation, in fact, and they 'should never imagine that they came to Roşia Montană to do [the project] for our sake,' said Liviu.

The company and its local spokespersons, were, indeed, surprised by this lack of support. At the public meeting in

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[83] This is how Diana, RMGC's social specialist, characterized the local's expectations.

December 2007 (see footnote 82 above), Alexandru, a representative of the NGO Pro-Roşia Montană, which supported the mining project, said the following: 'there are some things which happened which neither us, nor the company nor anyone else *could have imagined*' (emphasis added). He added that he talked to many people working for RMGC and that he was both 'surprised and sad'. Why? Because some people 'who had worked for RMGC for 7, 5 or 4 years, who got their bread from the company [...] told me the following: if they lay us off, we will turn against the project'. This attitude could be interpreted as one of revenge, although it seemed more realistic to suggest that some locals were actually trying to align themselves with the second most powerful party in the conflict over Roşia Montană, namely the extra-local opposition to the project. After all, there were rumours in Roşia Montană and beyond, that George Soros might also have certain 'interests' in the mining project.

From an experience-distant view it seemed difficult to understand that under conditions of high uncertainty and perceived risks, some locals were nevertheless *willing to act*. Mihnea, who complained [above] about the increased stress which he has experienced since RMGC came to Roşia Montană said that, if the mining project is not approved, he would know what to do: 'with an internet address and all the fuss made around Roşia Montană, there will be people who would like to come and see. I am still young, I know about mining, I could be a guide.' When asked what risk meant to her, Petra of Gura Cornei said that, surprisingly, she probably took a risk of 'not constructing more buildings', probably in view of the high compensations offered by RMGC. Her willingness to act was thus projected onto the past.

The surprise factor probably assumed its strongest manifestation when potential project supporters became outspoken critics. At the same public meeting in December 2007, Ioana of Bălmoşeşti, the isolated hamlet alluded to above, asked one of the RMGC directors in charge of property acquisitions what will happen to her and to two other homes who remained

isolated because all neighbours had moved out. 'We have been in the project area in 2000 – 2001, we had a file [with the company] but then, when were about to sell, the acquisitions were stopped.' The RMGC director promised some vague remedies for their situation but did not commit to any future acquisitions because the company was presumably also 'throwing itself into the unknown' due to the suspension of the EIA review process. The response seemed to be disappointing for Ioana. At the end of the dialogue, she concluded with a determined voice: 'But then, next year, *we will not sell anymore*, because we will start building, we have made no improvements over so many years. We have a large family....' [emphasis added].

Maybe the most interesting form of surprise that the company encountered at Roşia Montană was the almost wholesale subversion of its compensation and acquisition policies. As stated above, according to the company's Resettlement and Relocation Action Plan, 'RMGC would apply the World Bank Group's Operational Directive on Involuntary Resettlement (OD 4.30)' (RMGC 2006a: 9)[84]. This directive was premised on the requirement that any private property expropriated based on the state's power of 'eminent domain'[85] had to be compensated (Szablowski 2002). However, from the beginning of the RMGC project until 2010, the proposed mine had never been formally declared of 'public interest'. The use of the World Bank's operational directive 4.30 could thus be seen as an attempt to create a constrained legal field premised on the notion that RMGC could mobilize the state's power of eminent domain to support its project and use expropriation as a last resort. Trubek et al. (1994: 417 - 418) argue that legal fields create *regulation*, which means the structuring of economic relations, *protection* for individuals and groups and *legitimation* for a given social order. The RRAP of RMGC was thus meant to regulate compensation for the eligible

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[84] The previous version of the RRAP (2003) included the same provision (p. 26).
[85] Szablowski (2002: 250) defines eminent domain as the right of the state "to force a sale of property that is required in the public interest."

residents of Roşia Montană in terms of 'the replacement value of their affected property, at a level intended to allow them to replace their property with a similar one' (RMCG 2006a: 43). This level of compensation was legitimated based on the fact that the World Bank's directive on involuntary resettlement was the international standard which ensured one of the most comprehensive and efficient forms of protection for people affected by involuntary displacement (RMGC 2006a: 34).

However, the interpretation and actual experience of displacement and compensation of the residents of Roşia Montană had redefined the legal field from one of forced displacement to one of free choice. How was this possible? With the mounting *transnational* opposition to the RMGC project, many residents had realized that the risk of expropriation of their properties was quite low and that, in fact, they could negotiate their compensation *in market terms* rather than under the principle of eminent domain. This was based, first and foremost, on the inviolability of private property. Dorin, a resident of Roşia Montană and representative of AM stated that their struggle 'began with [the issue of property] and this is how it [was going to] end.'[86] 'The struggle for property' was the fundamental aspect of the opposition to the project, according to Dorin, because the company could not commence the project as long as a single landowner refused to sell. In the words of the economist Herman Daly (2008: 153), the local opposition to the RMGC project had managed to substitute the 'exchange principle' for the 'threat principle' which the company wanted to impose.

The more or less explicit awareness of this fact has brought with it a variety of shades of resistance by people who did not, in principle, refuse to sell their properties but contested the terms in which this was to be done. Mihai, a resident of Roşia Montană,

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[86] As Ban and Romanţan rightly note, the emphasis on liberal values such a property rights, strengthened the power of the project opposition by attracting EU support and resonating well with the postcommunist rejection of arbitrary property seizure by the state (Ban and Romanţan 2008: 12).

illustrated this view while answering the question of what 'adequate compensation' meant to him:

> First, it has to be a true negotiation. What did they [company] do until now? They came and said "Sir, do you allow us to measure [your property]?" And they come with the measuring tape and they measure your house, they count your trees, they measure your stairs, they measure your land. Then they make a calculation: "this is how much you will get for a square meter of land, this is how much you will get for a square meter of house, depending on the house type…" and then they say "Sir, this is what we can offer you." The owner says: I am "satisfied" or "not satisfied". If he is satisfied, it's ok, we shake hands, if you agree, obviously. If not, if the owner is not satisfied, they leave him alone. But, I don't think this means negotiation. Negotiation is when… Sir, when I want to buy a house, I ask the owner "how much….", but I don't start measuring his house or see how it's made because…he would not allow me to do this. I ask him, "Sir, how much do you want for this house?" And he answers: this much." *And I tell him my price.* And from there we start the negotiation, he lowers [his price], I increase [mine]. This means negotiation. This has not happened with RMGC [emphasis added].

Several things are worth pointing out from this lengthy quote. First, the respondent was obviously not concerned about the threat of expropriation. This was confirmed by 22 other respondents, out of 82 interviewed using the semi-structured interview, who explicitly denied the prospect of expropriation. Those who explicitly agreed[87] that the company might use expropriation were fewer (only 10) and some of them lived outside the project affected area and were probably less well informed about the property acquisitions. Second, Mihai disagreed with the standardized assessment of the value of properties, based on measurements and unit prices (for land, buildings etc.). He nevertheless acknowledged that the company only 'makes an offer' – a soft manifestation of the legal

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[87] The interview schedule included two multiple-choice questions where respondents were asked to state if they agree or disagree with certain statements (5 drawn from the project opposition and 5 from the supporters). The point of these closed questions was, however, to elicit comments from the respondents on the statements put forward. The figures reported above are respondents who commented that expropriation has been/will be used or not. For this reason I used the phrases "explicitly agree" or "explicitly reject".

field of involuntary displacement - but did not impose the price. Third, and most importantly, it seemed that the respondent regarded this approach as less than a true negotiation because there was no space for him to 'tell his price'. He felt thus hampered in his ability to be a free actor on the market.

Several other respondents showed great willingness to negotiate the prices of their properties, seemingly taking for granted that they can 'tell their price'. Even residents who would normally be seen as vulnerable did not shy away from asking for a higher price and refusing to sell if their expectations were not met. Iulia was a poor pensioner[88] living by herself in the Corna valley and suffering from schizophrenia. She was offered 1.450 billion lei[89], which was a very high price for a property in the area of the Apuseni Mountains. However, she claimed that she expected an increase of this amount so that she could buy a house in Alba Iulia and receive an extra 2 billion lei [$80.000 USD] to buy an apartment for her son. She said that she would not leave with less than the equivalent of $160.000 USD, in total, which was a large amount by any measure, almost three times than what she was initially offered. Eleonora was another pensioner living in the Roşia Montană valley who claimed that she became ill due to the stress brought by the arrival of RMGC. Although not as economically disadvantaged as Iulia, she was also expecting an offer that would be satisfactory for her family: 'If we are to leave, they should give me as much as I see fit so I can build a house to my liking.' Having to contend with free actors on the market, with variable preferences, was probably the least that the company envisioned when it first drafted its resettlement plan according to World Bank guidelines for 'involuntary resettlement'. The locals appropriated the context of negotiations to suit and further their own interests: the 'distant' practices were adapted to the emergent interaction contexts.

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[88] She receives a medical pension, although she is only 45 years old, and reported (in 2007) a monthly income of $76 USD.

[89] The equivalent of $58,000 USD.

At this point it is important to draw attention to the following paradox. The free actor was created, at least in part, by the opposition to a neoliberal project aiming to privatize the assets owned by the state. There was, in any case, a difference in scale: while the advancement of a free market regime was temporarily halted at the national and in some sense at the global level, the free actor was newly created at the local level. In other words, the local-to-global alliance of NGOs opposing the mine helped to empower local actors and to make them aware of their ability to deal with the company on more favourable terms. This was clearly explained by Dorin when he claimed that without the opposition to the project the prices offered by the company would have been much lower and that there would have been less pressure on the company to deal more carefully with local people. Many of those who sold their properties, Dorin argued, acknowledged that because of AM they received better prices and were employed by the company. Even as the small-scale speculations with 'wooden cottages' on the Roşia Montană real estate market were somewhat risky ventures, it seemed that the prolonged uncertainty facing the project had the paradoxical effect of increasing the value of properties.

There was, however, another paradox noted by Dorin in his relationships with the transnational mining corporation. It was, in some sense, the mirror image of the first.

> From the evil done by Gabriel Resources something good will emerge. Without GR, Roşia Montană would not have become a brand, [which is useful] for its future development. Its image is on many people's minds, for a possible future based on tourism. Without GR, Roşia Montană would have remained anonymous (Roşia Montană, 2007).

Living close to trials and tribulations of a free-floating place, Dorin was able to spot a third paradox. On the one hand, the presence of RMGC at Roşia Montană had brought with it a variety of tensions and potential conflict between those refusing to leave and those who wanted the RMGC project in hope that they would find

employment at the new mine. On the other, due to resettlement, people left Roşia Montană and this reduced the 'community' pressure on those who wanted to stay. Adrian, another resident of Roşia Montană and opponent of the mine, noted on a similar note. 'What does it mean to be a supporter of the mining project?' he asked. 'It means, he continued, to sell your house to the company and leave, which means to not be a miner anymore.'

Paradox, seen as discrepancy between experience-nearing meanings and experience distancing decisions, was more prevalent among the residents of Roşia Montană than just among the committed opponents [members of Alburnus Maior] of the RMGC project. A major source of paradoxical experiences was the cessation of the state-owned gold mine at Roşia Montană in 2006. Oana expressed such feelings with a strong sense of local history: '...here we had good gold. Our forefathers said that mining is good. I don't know why they stopped it.' When asked if the state-owned mine should have continued its activity, almost four fifths of 90 respondents answered in the affirmative. Sergiu, for example, claimed that there would have been 'more workplaces, more secure, and even our descendants could have found work'. Vlad, a resident of Corna village, pointed out the benefit of 'stability' given by the state-run mine and the fact that people would have stayed here: 'Even if the company pays better than the state, but for how long?' Luca of Corna village, who had sold his house to the company at the time of the interview, nevertheless seemed to have strong feelings in favour of state-supported mining. When asked about the hypothetical continuation of the old mine, he answered:

> It would have been much better; there would have been workplaces for everyone and it would have been for the state – it was safe and it was for your country. My son would have worked here as well, it was a life [passed on] from father to son, for everyone here the same.

The resettlement experience was itself a source of paradox. Several ethnographic accounts have been published in the weekly magazine *Formula As*, which has covered the Roşia

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Montană conflict in great detail[90]. An interesting topic covered by journalists who have visited repeatedly Roşia Montană was the 'return of the resettled.' Albeit somewhat dramatized, such descriptions were very useful inasmuch as I have not managed to interview former residents of Roşia Montană who, for various reasons, had returned to this place. One of the stories told by *Formula As* reporter Bogdan Lupescu (2006) was that of the 'şuster' [from German Schuster, or shoemaker] Zlaszki Coloman. At 70 years of age, Coloman had been one of the leaders of the Catholic community in Roşia Montană and a man with warm feelings for his village. One day, however, he sold his house to RMGC and moved to Zlatna, a nearby former smelting town. Lupescu described [in 2006] how, since his departure, Coloman returned ever more frequently to Roşia Montană:

> He wanders from house to house and gathers the shoes of the locals and the goes to Zlatna, to repair them. He charges very little, sometimes nothing. He comes, gathers the shoes in silence and disappears for a while. After a while, he returns and gives back the shoes, ready-made (Lupescu 2006).

Another case described by Lupescu (2006) in his article entitled 'Longing, as for death' is that of Silvia Plic. Together with her daughter, Terezia, this 70-year old woman sold her house to RMGC and moved to the nearby town of Abrud. Her son, Ovidiu, wanted to stay in Roşia Montană. After less than one year spent in the little house which Terezia and Silvia had bought in Abrud, the mother decided that she could not take it anymore. She wanted to move back to Roşia Montană. Her son, Ovidiu, had adapted the former stable (which had not been sold yet) to make it inhabitable. Learning of his mother's wish, he built an extension to the stable, and he and his family agreed to occupy the 'upgraded' former stable (see Figure 7.3). Silvia Plic's former

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[90] The journalists of *Formula As* have published no less than 329 articles, opinion pieces or letters on Roşia Montană between February 2002 and June 2009, which means an average of about 41 articles per year out of 52 issues published annually.

house was only 50 m from her new residence and she sometimes went there, in Lupescu's words, to 'take her former home into her arms, and press her face against the pink lime'.

Figure 7. 3: **'Some returned to Roşia Montană and turned the stable into a new house, [only to be in this place]'** (Lorin Niculae, 2006).
Source: http://www.osf.ro/ro/galerie_photo.php?id_poza=309

Some sense of longing can be discerned even among those relocatees who had no plans, at least at the time of the interview, to return to Roşia Montană. Mr. Cornescu recalled that when he stood in front of his apartment building in Roşia Montană, just before he left, 'nobody knew what was going on in my heart'. His wife added that whoever came to Roşia Montană did not leave anymore. They both recalled a story of a dove, that was taken by its owners afar, and that returned to Roşia Montană. The symbolism of returning as displayed by these respondents is certainly noteworthy.

In all of these cases one can read the paradox of making choices in which the experience-distant logic of displacement, even if voluntary, clashed with the experience-near desire to preserve what Gidden's (1990) called the 'reliability of places'. Maybe Viorel from Roșia Montană village put it best when he explained what the 'curse of gold' meant to him: 'Isn't *this* the curse of gold? That the company comes and you have to leave. They don't force you, you leave because you want to. [emphasis added]'

For the all the human dramas experienced by some locals or the great expectations held by others or even the many combinations of risk and opportunity, surprise and paradox, it seemed that a free-floating place was a realm of freedom. It might seem surprising that the struggle between extra-local regimes of power opened up unanticipated spaces for local-level agency, but this is also what Szousa Gille (2000) discovered in her study of a local-to-global conflict over waste incineration in postsocialist Hungary. The local was much more alive than previously thought, precisely because it was selectively globalized.

The struggle over the Roșia Montană project is ongoing. However, it has significantly changed its locus from the local scene, in which the local residents, activists and company representatives and their changing stances played a critical role to a transnational context, that of the investment disputes tribunal of the World Bank. This analysis has sought to capture some of the richness of changing experiences of place, during its transformation and globalization, before they fade into oblivion.

Chapter Eight   Conclusion

This book provides a theoretically informed interpretation of the Roșia Montană case, one that challenges, in part at least, the most widely known stances on this conflict. The effort is to problematize previously unseen, or only dimly perceived facets of the conflict and how they have shaped the history of this place.

The social scientific research carried out on Roșia Montană over the last two decades has largely sought to demonstrate or flesh out contemporary theories or explanatory models using Roșia Montană as an illustrative case. At its best, it has endeavored to push the limits of existing theories (e.g. of political ecology or environmental justice) towards new problematizations and questions (e.g. Velicu and Kaika 2017). In other instances, it has used subtlety and interpretive creativity in making sense of the long-term conflict and ramifications (Szombati 2007, Alexandrescu 2012, Anghel 2013, Pop 2014, Soare and Tufiș 2020). Theories of globalization, theories of social movements, models of displacement, anthropological arguments, the framing of Roșia Montană in the mass media have all been applied to illuminate this case. Taken together, they provide a comprehensive overview of the various implications of this rich case.

What this book has sought to accomplish was to bring to light the sparkling vividness of Roșia Montană. To this end, I combined the geography of place with an adaptation of the Geertzian distinction of experience-nearing and experience-distancing. The choice of this interpretive framework appeared to this researcher as

one of the most germane for his research experience in Roșia Montană.

In a nutshell, the conclusion of this research is that what has changed during this conflict were not only the supporters and opponents of the new mine, the individual residents of Roșia Montană or their community, the local history or economy, but also the place as a whole. Rather than being an inert background for the unfolding of a human drama, I have tried to bring the place to life, by different means. First, I have showed how a mining economy such as that from Roșia Montană has long occupied the position of a crucial hinterland for different regimes of exploitation based in imperial or national metropolises (e.g. Rome, Vienna or Bucharest). This was the period in which Roșia Montană functioned within the so-called pyramid of places. During the last decade of the twentieth century, this mining place has been extricated from this long-term dependency and thrown on an uncertain trajectory. The aim was to insert it quickly – via a junior mining company – into the circuits of venture capital and transform it into a globally tradable 'world-class' mining asset. This attempt was, however, only partly successful: Roșia Montană was removed from its old economic position within the Romanian mining industry but was never fully integrated into the global mining industry. In the early 2000s, Roșia Montană had become a free-floating place. However, it acquired the anthropological quality of a globalized place via several distinct processes that have profoundly transformed the experience of place (see Figure 8.1).
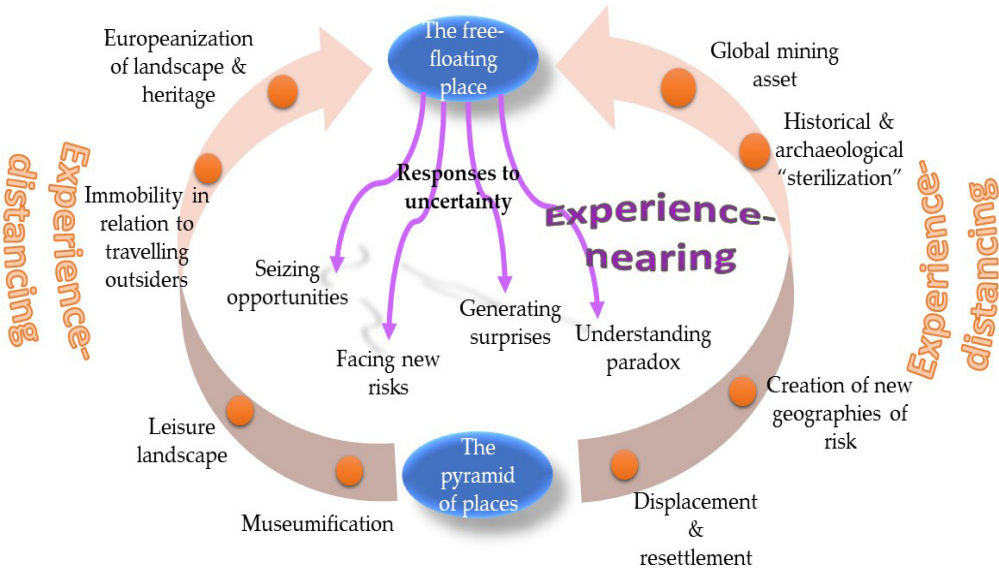
Figure 8. 1: **Roșia Montană's trajectory from the pyramid of places to free-floating place and its attendant experience-nearing and -distancing processes.**

Source: Author's interpretation of Geertz's distinction (1979) and of the archival and ethnographic material on Roșia Montană.

These processes were profound and left an undeniable mark on the experience of place. Unintentionally, the attempts at distancing have engendered reactions from activists and social movement organizations that have sought to counterbalance the company's efforts by safeguarding Roșia Montană's history and community in terms of a European heritage. There has been a strong tendency on the part of extra-local activists to 'museify' Roșia Montană, to interpret its landscapes and heritage as European treasures. This has created an image of time-less immobility of this place, at the very time that it was undergoing one of its most dynamic transformations.

It can be said that the experience-distancing carried out by the mining company has been much deeper and consequential that that of the extra-local activists. However, both processes

have tended to create an essentialized image of place. Against this background, the residents of Roșia Montană have painted a much more vivid picture of this place. Steeped in uncertainty, they have realized both the new risks and also the new opportunities offered by the clash of the two distancing processes (Figure 8.1). They have generated surprises for both project developers and their opponents by agreeing to sell their properties, but sometimes only in part, thereby retaining a bargaining chip in the ongoing struggle over the project. They have even attempted to extract additional compensations from the mining company, by building foundation-less cottages. Last but not least, the local opponents of the project have become aware of the paradox of their opposition: struggling against the project has created a larger space of negotiations for the other residents. Due to the local opposition, the mining company was forced to increase its compensation levels for the acquired properties. The struggle against the mining project has thus created a ripple effect of hastening displacements among those willing to get a good bargain for their properties. But it may have also delayed some displacements of those waiting to see how far compensations may rise.

What does the making of a globalized place mean in general? And what does it mean for Roșia Montană in particular? Places have always been in some sense more than just local. I therefore agree, with Massey (1991: 29), that the history of *any* place is 'the product of layer upon layer of different sets of linkages, both local and to the wider world.' Massey followed Dorothy Carrington's reconstruction of Corsican history through its different layers and linkages to cultures beyond its shores. Carrington showed how the *Granite Island* was shaped by its relationship with France, preceded by those with Genoa and Aragon and earlier with the Byzantine empire, the Roman empire and going as far back as the megalith builders (Carrington 1971 as cited in Massey 1991).

The same approach can be applied to Roșia Montană, as has been done in chapter five, by showing its role in the early Dacian kingdom, its coveted status during the Dacian-Roman wars (101 – 106 AD) and the highly organized exploitation of gold during the Roman colonization of Dacia (between 106 and 271 AD). This was followed by the exploitation of gold on behalf of the Hungarian kings (during the Middle Ages), the new impetus given to mining during the Habsburg Empire (late 18th century) and the double monarchy (until 1918), in interwar Romania and following the nationalization of all mines in 1948. Finally, the dismantling of the state-centric economy which began in 1989 and the arrival of North-American mining investors in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and the spectacular rise of transnational movements opposing mining, mark the trajectory of this place. All these different historical and cultural layers make Roșia Montană – and with it all mining places worldwide – thoroughly regional and global in their relations. The outstanding question is, then, what makes a *globalized place?* It is Massey's seminal essay on 'A Global Sense of Place' (1991) that provides valuable clues for thinking about the future of experience-distancing and -nearing.

First, the 'current fragmentation and disruption' accompanying the thorough spreading of global capitalism has irrevocably shattered '(idealized) notions of an era when places were (supposedly) inhabited by coherent and homogeneous communities' (Massey 1991: 24). What Gabriel Resources has set in motion with its arrival in Roșia Montană has not only been the prospect of huge machinery and toxic compounds ripping through the ecosystem; not only the cold 'cash nexus' destroying the relationships between residents and their homes; and not only corruption and political interference undermining community life. With Bebbington and Humphreys Bebbington (2018), I argue that the disruption has run much deeper, undermining any economic certainty, whether positive or negative. Will the company get its way and force all residents from their land, possibly by force? Or

will it ultimately fail, bringing all mining to an end, in a community that has *always* in some way used the extraction of gold to ensure at least part of its livelihood?

Second, places are anything but monolithic, even if there are ideological advantages if they were such. In Roșia Montană, these and similar questions have percolated through the 'power geometry' of this place, arranging 'different social groups, and different individuals, […] in very distinct ways in relation to these flows and interconnections' (Massey 1991: 25). An initial illustration of this differential positioning can be seen in Table 4.1, presenting the physical and media visibility of different actors performing their lives on the scene of Roșia Montană, but it can be greatly expanded. Without mining, the residents of Roșia Montană found themselves 'freed' from any one dominant economic activity. Some pursued subsistence farming, others sought to extract compensations and concessions from the mining company while still others tried to capitalize on the influx of foreigners (miners and anti-mining activists alike) at the height of the controversy and in its aftermath[91]. While the flows of cash and information about opportunities has set people and ideas in incessant motion (Bebbington and Humphreys Bebbington 2018), it has also 'effectively imprisoned' others, as Massey aptly put it (1991: 25). Among the latter are some of those who have opted for 'resettlement' but for whom the mining company has never completed the so-called New Roșia Montană (Piatra Albă) site. They were left stranded in some of sparsely populated areas of Roșia Montană, while seeing their neighbors leaving and the public infrastructure of the community declining still further, after it had already undermined by the closure of the state mine. While some observers are optimistic about the prospects of self-

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[91] One of the most recent examples is the successful brand "Made in Roșia Montană" created by Tica Darie, a young entrepreneur who has moved to Roșia Montană. His online shop sells merino knitwear produced by 35 senior women (Velicu 2019).

sufficiency among those remaining in Roșia Montană (e.g. Velicu 2019), I contend that there are specific configurations of class, gender, age and ethnicity (Massey 1991) that make some residents particularly vulnerable to the politics of oblivion that accompany the political economy of a globalized place.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, can Roșia Montană be used to construct a progressive notion of place? Places are processes, says Massey (1991), and there is certainly the case that Roșia Montană will continue to evolve as it has done over the last two decades. In particular, the verdict of the ICSID of the World Bank will probably shape the future course of this place for decades to come. If the Romanian state wins its case, Roșia Montană will probably make its way on the UNESCO heritage list and thus come closest to a museified version of its former self. The museum might become alive again if increased flows of investment, high-end ecological and cultural tourism and better transport routes will bring the place at a favorable point of intersection between transnational flows. Lest we rest assured by such a favorable scenario, one should not forget that such a scenario will slowly erase the traces of a mining culture. The former miners and their stories – including those of ecosystem 'destruction' and capitalist 'exploitation' - will fall into oblivion among the comfortable visitors coming to Roșia Montană to learn a little about the local history and take a breath of fresh air. Still, the question of what will happen with the properties that the mining company has acquired from the locals over almost a decade will remain open. Before letting the past become congealed into a romanticized image of 'the place that defeated the extractivist monster', one should remember with Massey that 'if we are going to have a progressive place, there has got to be an explicit debate about the nature of that place' (Massey et al. 2009: 412).

If Gabriel Resources were to win the case against the Romanian state, the future trajectories are more widely open. Will the state push the mining project as a way to recover part of

the costs of the lost trial? Would then the opposition mobilize once again to the levels it had reached in 2013? What would happen to those still living in Roșia Montană? Will the hard core of Alburnus Maior activists (Eugen David, Zeno Corna or Sorin Jurca) become the Eastern European counterparts of the South American icon of resistance Maxima Acuña (Bebbington and Humphreys Bebbington 2018)? Unlike the first scenario, this one would validate Massey's (1991) expectation that a progressive notion of place comes about through the proliferation of linkages between the threatened 'insides' of place and its various 'outsides'. The renewed conflict over the future of Roșia Montană will probably re-activate numerous internal conflicts over the meaning of place.

Perhaps most ambitiously, we take Massey's position that the re-ignited local conflict over Roșia Montană (Massey et al. 2009) will, alongside other such 'never-ending' conflicts, increasingly shape the workings of extractivism at the global level. Mining in the unfolding 21st century might thus prove to be a thoroughly political process, at the same time at which the technologies will make the extraction of trace amounts of valuable materials increasingly accessible. It is thus essential not to lose sight of the new sites – such as peripheral mining towns and 'in the middle of nowhere' places in which political struggles will increasingly be waged.

Appendix

Table A. 1 **The random walk of political support for the Roșia Montană project**

The table includes only political actors: leaders, parties, ministers (of the environment and industry).

Dates	Support for the RMGC project	Obstruction of the project
March 31, 2000	**Romanian Government** 'fully supports' the development of the mining industry by foreign mining companies, including the development of the Roșia Montană mining project. (GR PR) Press release signed by: **Radu Berceanu** (Minister of industry), **Vlad Anton** (Secretary of state at the ministry of waters, forestry and environmental protection), **Mihail Ianas** (President, National agency of mineral resources)	
August, 2002		**Hungarian minister of the Environment** and Water Management plans to activate Espoo convention (on transboundary environmental impacts) (Greenpeace 2006) [Espoo convention ratified by Romania on March 29, 2001[92]]

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[92] http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XXVII-4&chapter=27&lang=en

Dates	Support for the RMGC project	Obstruction of the project
October 28, 2002		Caroline Jackson, chair of the **Environmental commission of the European Parliament** confirmed that Roşia Montană is a serious problem with regard to Romania's EU accession. (Greenpeace 2006).
November 1, 2002		'Petre Lificiu, **Romanian minister of the Environment**, expressed serious concerns regarding the economic and environmental aspects of this mining project'. (Greenpeace 2006)
March 4, 2003		The Romanian Academy asked all Romanian authorities involved to stop the RMGC project based on arguments related to the environment, geology, history, economy and archaeology.
Late May 2003		**Environment minister** Petre Lificiu suggested Gabriel Resources might not have enough money to get the project started, citing a 50 per cent drop in its stock price since last year (Canadian Press June 5, 2003)
June 5, 2003		'**Prime Minister Adrian Nastase** made a first public statement re the RMGC project' He claimed that 'the RMGC project involves serious social and environmental risks and is not a priority for Romania. He stated that he does not wish for Romania to become a modern colony as a result of this project.' (Greenpeace, 2006; Toader-ZIUA 2003)

July 7, 2003	Favourable report of the Romanian **parliamentary commission**, interview with **Alexandru Sassu** (chair). 'The project will provide significant benefits to Romania and its economy. […] revitalization of the Romanian mining industry' (GR PR July 7, 2003[93]; Ziua April 27, 2004; Ziua October 11, 2004). Sassu, moved from PD to PSD in January 2003.	
July 10, 2003		'**Adrian Nastase** made a second statement, arguing that the recent report of the Parliamentary Commission on the RMGC project is vague and that the project itself involves serious social and environmental problems' (Greenpeace 2006)
Late summer 2003	**Traian Basescu, leader of PD** stated on the occasion of a visit to RM: 'A misguided political decision, an environmental demagogy, could condemn a whole are to poverty. […] PD will have to take a political stance on the first private investment in mining. When we will decide that the Roşia Montană investment should not be abandoned, we should be able to justify it.' (Formula As, Ion Longhin Popescu December 1 – 7, 2003)	
September 10, 2003	Dan Ioan **Popescu**, **minister of economy and commerce** stated at a meeting with trade unions in early September that 'he believes in this project and supports it' (as cited by the chair of the Meridian trade union in Ziua September 10, 2003)	

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[93] Underscored source is the main reference used.

November 7 – 9, 2003		During its general meeting, the **European Federation of Green Parties** issued a very strong resolution against the RMGC project (Greenpeace 2006).
November 26, 2003	Radu **Berceanu**, **former minister of industry** [1996 – 2000]. He claimed, at a seminar organized by RMGC in Bucharest, that the Romanian population has paid mining subsidies in excess of 5 billion bw. 1990 and 2003 while the RM project will benefit the state and the local population. (Ziua November 27, 2003)	
December 8, 2003		Visit and assessment of the RM project by 4 European MPs and [at least] two strong statements against the project (Greenpeace 2006). European MPs: Christa Klass (European People's Party, Germany), in addition to the three below. **Hans Kronberger** (independent, Austria): The population of Europe should understand the scope of the RM problem and keep an eye on what is going on there. [...] The accession process has not been completed and it is unwise for some politicians to argue that we have to choose between workplaces and environmental protection. **Jonas Sjostedt** (European United Left, Sweden): 'The government should bear in mind that, once an EU member, [Romania] will be one of the foremost mining powers of [Europe]. [...] If this project goes ahead, violating European laws, Romania will face difficulties in its accession'. [competitor **Marie Anne Isler Beguin**

		(Green Party, France): 'For Romania, RMGC proposes an unsustainable development strategy which contradicts European philosophy. [...] The only development we advocate is the alternative, clean development of the area, by applying the solutions identified by the Romanian Academy. Benefiting from European and WB funds, the "rosieni" will lead a better life than with the mining project. The gold could be further exploited, as it has been done for several thousand years, but in a less-than-pharaonic manner. [...] we will request that the European Commission take its role in earnest and deal with this issue in its negotiations with Romania.' (Popescu 2003h, Formula As, December 15 – 21, 2003).
Late 2003 and early 2004	The center-right political opposition expressed support for a project it has authorized while in government between 1996 and 2000 (Ban and Romanțan, 2008).	
March 2004	Dan Ioan **Popescu**, **minister of economy and commerce** claimed that the RMGC project will bring with it 'jobs and well-being'. (Formula As, March 8 – 14, 2004)	
March 12, 2004		Voicing his concern regarding the evolution of the RMGC project, Miklos Persányi, the **Hungarian minister of the environment**, requested urgent briefing from the Romanian authorities regarding the RMGC project, invoking the Espoo convention (Greenpeace 2006).
March 29,	**Traian Basescu** (mayor of	

2004[94]	Bucharest, president of PD, president of Romania 2004 -) stated in Alba Iulia: 'This project will bring prosperity in the Country of the Moti. PD should support such a project not only because it capitalizes on a huge resource for the country's wealth but even more because it will restore the equilibrium of the environment.' (Popescu in Formula As, October 12 – 18, 2004)	
June 27, 2004		The **Romanian Ecologist Party** took a stance on the RMGC project, calling it "deadly" and warning about the danger of using cyanide in the mining industry and about the very serious precedent set by the Baia Mare case (Greenpeace 2006).
July 16, 2004		The **Romanian Academy** restated its position concerning the RMGC project. In a release to the press, the Academy stresses the fact that the planned exploitation does not serve the public interest in strengthening the national economy to justify the collateral effects associated with it (Greenpeace 2006).
October 8, 2004	**Traian Basescu (leader of PD)** states at a press conference in Cluj-Napoca: 'Based on the available information, Roşia Montană is necessary given the value of the project and the alternative workplaces in the area. I think it is a good project, which could go ahead' (Ziua October 9, 2004; Informatia	

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[94] http://romania.indymedia.org/en/2006/03/1297.shtml

	de Alba October 27, 2009; Ziua, July 15, 2007).	
October 14, 2004		**Hungarian Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany** at a joint news conference with PM Nastase**,** offered Romania increased investment, if the neighbouring state stops a controversial gold mining project. 'Creating jobs alone is not a sufficient (reason) to destroy a natural environment of thousands of years -- this is crime against nature, crime against people.' (Reuters October 15, 2004, Wood, Andrew (2005) 'Gyurcsany has also said that it would be 'sinful and wrong' for Hungary, which joined the EU in May 2004, to veto Romania's 2007 accession if the mine goes ahead' (cited in Wood 2005: 4).
November 11 – 14, 2004	Second visit by 4 **European MPs to Roşia Montană**. Nelly Maes (President of the European Free Alliance): 'There is a company which offers this [environmental] guarantee, with an alternative [form] of exploitation, which is much better. People need to understand that RMGC has, based on what we saw here, one of the most sustainable programs of economic recovery.' (Ziarul de Apuseni November 19, 2004).	
December 16, 2004		In its resolution concerning 'Romania's progress towards accession' the **European Parliament** states: '41. Expresses its deep concern about the long transitional periods agreed regarding the environment chapter, particularly as regards the Roşia Montană mine

		development, which poses a serious environmental threat to the whole region.'
December 21, 2004	Release of the O'Hara Information Report (following a field visit at RM, July 11 – 15, 2004). One of the conclusions of the report: 'The RMGC project would appear to provide an economic basis for sustainable development of the whole area with positive benefits on environmental and social as well as cultural grounds.' (2004: 3).	
February 27, 2006		The **Romanian Academy** reaffirms its position against Gabriel's proposal.
March 25, 2006	**Prime minister Calin Popescu Tariceanu** (PNL) (after a conference on 'Liberals for Europe – 2006', Budapest) argues, defensively, that the mine does not involve 'exaggerated risks for the environment' (Ziua March 29, 2006).	
April 2006	**European commissioner for the Environment Stavros Dimas** avoided a clear answer on the risk represented by the Roşia Montană project, in his 2006 EC report (*Adevarul*, April 14, 2006).	
November 8, 2006		**Petru Lificiu**, president of the Green Party initiated a proposal, developed by the Commission of public administration, land management and ecological equilibrium, which aims to make the approval of large-scale mining projects contingent on parliamentary approval. **Relu Fenechiu** (PNL) is the chair of this commission and claimed that the proposed project will affect the forests in the area (Ziua de Cluj, October 13, 2006).

February 2, 2007		Registration of a law bill for debate in the Romanian Senate by **senators Peter Eckstein Kovacs (UDMR) and Gheorghe Funar (PRM)**. with the following content: 'Mining activity based on cyanide technologies is prohibited at any stage of gold and silver extraction and also at any stage of wastes processing and enrichment. This prohibition also applies to the use cyanide compounds in any percentage as well as to its use in combination with other methods for waste processing and enrichment.' (*Cyanide free Romania*). Motivation of the 2 senators: 'In the context of Romania becoming a European Union member state, the Romanian legislation has to be changed so that any breach of the right to a clean environment should be precluded. The present project law aims to create a safe habitat in the mining industry by excluding the use of cyanide from the exploitation and processing of ores.'
April 9, 2007		**Attila Korodi** (UDMR, 30) is nominated as **minister of the environment** (pending parliamentary approval). A state secretary at the Environment Ministry since January 2005, he stood out due to his critical position towards the Roşia Montană gold project in Transylvania (Hotnews, April 13, 2007).
May 2, 2007	**The Romanian government** adopted an unfavourable	

	point of view on the banning of cyanide in mining. The reason was that mining with cyanide is not banned in the EU (*Ziua,* July 2, 2007, *Cotidianul,* June 8, 2007, *Tricoloroul* July 28, 2007).	
May 30, 2007		**55 senators from PSD, UDMR, PC, PRM and PD** have voted in favour of the **ban on using cyanide in mining**. Against the ban voted five liberal senators (Ziua de Cluj, May 31, 2007, *Cyanide free Romania*).
June 6, 2007		Following an initiative by **environment minister** Attila **Korodi**, the **Romanian government** has adopted a favourable / supporting position/point of view on the banning of cyanide in mining (*Ziua,* June 7, 2007; *Gandul,* undated).
September 25, 2007		**Cristian Diaconescu**, PSD spokesperson, announced that PSD opposes the Roşia Montană project and its MPs will vote in favour of the bill to ban the use of cyanide in mining. He invoked social and environmental arguments, the environment being an 'inestimable value for a society' according to social-democratic principles (*Cyanide free Romania,* September 25, 2007).
September 25, 2007		Bogdan Olteanu, chair of the Chamber of Deputies: wants to see which parliamentary group wants a 'clean and healthy development for Romania and which is in favour of projects which damage human health and the environment.' (*Romania fara cianuri,* September 25, 2007).

| December 3, 2009 *Last presidential debate between Mircea Geoana and Traian Basescu* | **Traian Basescu, presidential candidate in the 2009 elections (PD), winner in the elections:** At present, I do not have a clear opinion on the Roșia Montană problem. In principle, [only] in principle, I wish Romania to develop the 600, 800 tonnes of gold [sic], 2000 tonnes of silver which are thought to be in the deposit. However, we need to be very careful when making a decision. Personally, I will support the solution recommended by experts. I will not exert any political influence on the decision. But, I repeated, in principle, I think that we should exploit the resource we have, if this does not inflict damage on the archaeological sites and the environment, which could not be recovered. [...] I would support the development of resources on condition that the damage done to the historical sites and to the environment are not dramatic and irreversible. (B1 TV Live broadcast of presidential debate, December 3, 2009) | **Mircea Geoana, presidential candidate in the 2009 elections (PSD):** Unless I am convinced that this project does not affect the environment and all things that represent the values of sustainable development, I will be against this project (B1 TV Live broadcast of presidential debate, December 3, 2009). |

Source: Author's analysis of various media sources, as indicated in each of the cells containing information.

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