

## **Roșia Montană and Its Publics: Governance and Participatory Democracy at Community and Corporate Level\***

**Abstract.** Late modernity has spawned various risks at personal, social, national and international level. Among them, the ones that have been gaining increased public attention are ecological risks since, should such risks materialize into disasters, their impact would go far beyond local areas to alter the life of humans and non-humans on a broad regional or global scale. My article aims to investigate the discursive frames and discursive actions through which various publics, a mining company and Romanian politicians have been constructing arguments to legitimize and to oppose, respectively, a major transnational development project. This project, funded by the Canadian-based Gabriel Resources company, aims to mine gold and silver using cyanide in the Apuseni Mountains in central Transylvania, Romania. The campaign to save Roșia Montană, a millennia-old settlement that could disappear should the mining operations begin, grew from an almost hopeless local initiative into a civic and environmental action on a global scale, whose scope and success have turned the scales against the Canadian corporation. In the context of the economic crisis, the mining project has been gaining momentum and visibility in the media and it has led to divergent political statements. I argue that the parallel processes of harnessing support for the project and building opposition against the project has been an exercise in the development of the company's Corporate Social Responsibility messages and governance mechanisms, as well as an exercise in participatory democracy at community level and in online communities.

**Keywords:** Roșia Montană, mining project, discursive legitimization, public interest, participatory democracy.

### **1. Introduction**

In the context of the current economic crisis, the price of gold has been rising steadily, reaching an historical level at \$1,900 an ounce<sup>1</sup>. Geological research has shown that Romania has the largest undeveloped deposit of gold

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<sup>1</sup> According to graphs monitoring the fluctuation of the price of gold available online at <http://www.kitco.com/charts/livegold.html>, this level was reached in the second half of August and early September 2011.

and silver ore in Europe, concentrated in an area with a 2,000-year tradition of gold mining at the heart of the region called Transylvania. It has been estimated that in the Roșia Montană region there are currently approximately 300 tons of gold and 1,700 tons of silver. This geological fact has attracted the interest of foreign investors. As early as 1997, the Canadian company Gabriel Resources (a company that was set up precisely for the purpose of mining gold in the Roșia Montană region) signed a contract with the Romanian state in order to extract gold and silver by using state-of-the-art technologies. One needs not be an expert in corporate law nor a highly trained economist to realize that the contract favors by far Gabriel Resources, which owns 80.69 % of the joint company called Roșia Montană Gold Corporation. The balance of 19.31 % belongs to CNCAF Minvest SA, the state-owned Romanian mining company that used to mine gold in Roșia Montană before the mine was closed in 1996. So far, due to the opposition of local NGOs, due to the archaeological relevance of the site and to the reaction of international institutions, the project has remained in the pipeline. However, after September 2010, when the process to assess the environmental impact (stopped in 2004) was resumed by the Ministry of Environment, the company's pressure to start the project has been increasingly stronger, with hyper-visibility in the national visual media as well as in local and national newspapers.

Both politicians and the public opinion are divided as to whether the project should start or not: on the one hand, the project is resisted because its terms and conditions privilege the Canadian company rather than the Romanian state. It is not only that Romania receives less than a quarter of the amount of gold and other metals that the Canadian company keeps, but it will have to cover the costs of preventing environmental hazards and managing the waste issuing from the exploitation, after the mine is closed and the Canadian company leaves the location. What is more, in order to mine gold, four mountains (Cârnic, Cetate, Orlea and Jig) would be dynamited, the village Roșia Montană (the oldest settlement recorded in documents in Romania) would be mostly destroyed and a 600 hectare pond would be constructed as a deposit for the cyanides-processed tailings in Corna Valley. The project is set to involve the destruction of several hundreds households and the relocation of families in a district built by the company near Alba Iulia, a neighboring city; it will demolish two churches and two houses of prayer, and unearth 410 tombs<sup>2</sup>. A dam would be built in order to separate the city of Abrud from the millions of tons of tailings that would result from what is projected to be the biggest open pit mine in Europe (with a diameter of 8 km). All these destructions in the natural and man-made environment would also destroy part of the oldest mine in Europe, dating back to the Roman times.

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<sup>2</sup> Various sources report various data and figures. I have chosen not to give an exact number of households that will be destroyed by the project and to report the number of churches and tombs that will be affected according to the information listed on the company's website.

On the other hand, the project is supported by those who believe the promises that the company makes: more than 3,600 jobs, 4 billion US dollars (out of which 1.8 billion would be direct benefits for the Romanian state), clean water and investments in education, housing and infrastructure. Under the circumstances where most working-age population in the area is unemployed and they are no longer entitled to welfare benefits, the mining project seems to be the solution for the villagers to lead a decent life and to offer opportunities to their children<sup>3</sup>.

The battle over what in the company's jargon is called "the project" has been carried out in discourse. In a sociological and discourse perspective, I prefer to call it a "case." The complexity of the Roșia Montană case defies any simplification. It functions as a nexus of conflicting and intertwining interests, claims, threats and promises, whose multiplication and discursive elaboration point to the relevance of language in late modernity and of one's capacity to make professional use of discursive resources. This article is an investigation into the discursive frames and discursive actions through which various institutions and their publics (the Canadian-based mining corporation Gabriel Resources, local and international NGOs) have been constructing arguments to legitimize and to oppose, respectively, this major transnational development project. It also unpacks the "case" as a nodal point through which one could understand globalization and its discontents, the current processes of social change that globalization entails and how communities and publics are articulated around arguments and counter-arguments.

## **2. Roșia Montană: framing the "case" from a sociological perspective**

The complexity of the Roșia Montană case lends itself to a multiplicity of approaches for scholarly investigation. It raises questions about the dynamics of globalization and of social and institutional change, about the nexus of conflicting local, national and transnational interests, about the weaknesses of the sovereign state and the power of corporations, and about the discursive resources used to build a case for or against a controversial project that promises a lot but is feared to deliver long-term outcomes that could be worse than the immediate benefits.

The discourse in which this case has been presented, on both sides, has highlighted the potential dangers and benefits of starting the project as well as those of deferring or stopping it. To a certain extent, the case epitomizes the characteristic features of what sociologists Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck have defined as "reflexive modernization." For Beck, reflexive modernization is "this new stage in which progress can turn into self-destruction, in which one

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<sup>3</sup> According to data reported on Roșia Montană Gold Corporation site, approximately 80 % of the inhabitants of Roșia Montană are unemployed at the moment.

kind of modernization undercuts and changes another” (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994, 2), the “modernization of modernization” (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994: 4) brought about by the proclaimed and still wished-for, in certain parts of the world, victory of new liberalism and of democracy. This reflexive modernization implies profound insecurities of an entire society, manifested through the proliferation of “nationalism, mass poverty, religious fundamentalism ..., economic crises, ecological crises, .... wars and revolutions, ... the states of emergency produced by great catastrophic accidents” (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994, 4).

Reflexive modernization has co-emerged with risk society, a stage in the development of modern societies in which “social, political, economic and individual rights increasingly tend to escape the institutions for monitoring and protection in industrialized societies” (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994, 5) The implication is that the various dangers of industrial society dominate public and private debates, political and economic conflicts. At this historical moment of the risk society, the institutions of industrial society are “producers and legitimators of threats they cannot control” (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994, 5). Whereas the classical industrial society’s conflicts were fought over the distribution of goods, the risk society breeds conflicts over “bads.” These are conflicts that involve the distributive responsibility over the management of the risks that precede, co-exist or linger after the production of goods, be they nuclear or chemical, genetic or environmental, pathological or psychological (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994, 5-6).

The risks of the reflexive modernization have an impact on three areas: on resources, on society and on collective sources of meaning and identity. First, resources are dissipated by the practices and technologies of modernization, be they natural resources, cultural artifacts, habitats or ways of life; second, the hazards and problems produced by reflexive modernization challenge the foundations of social understandings and norms of safety and can shake basic assumptions about how politics works and decisions are made, and third, collectives and groups disintegrate because they no longer share the same pool of resources for collective semiosis and collective identification. People find themselves “‘released’ from industrial society into the turbulence of the global risk society expected to live with a broad variety of different, mutually contradictory, global and personal risks” (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994, 7). With the spread of globalization, people and peoples live in heightened dependencies and under increased pressure to design and apply their own forms of governmentality in order to compensate for the incapacity of governments to cater for the basic needs and rights of their national subjects.

The global demise of the welfare state (which has become extremely topical under the circumstances where several modern states situated in the global North have been or are still close to bankruptcy at the moment when I am writing this article) has problematized national state governmentality and governance, political transparency and the government’s accountability to its national citizens, as well as the role of big businesses and of international

corporations in national economies and on the global market. Currently, there are direct accusations and protests against corporations (blamed for greed and for causing a financial crisis that has affected the entire world) as it is the case with the Occupy Wall-Street phenomenon<sup>4</sup>. The demonization of capitalism, however, coexists with its glamorization. New-liberalism, which has been the dominant ideology since the 1980s, is not deprived of its worshipers and promoters. In the aftermath of the 1989 revolutions across the ex-Communist block and more recently, in the aftermath of the Arabian spring revolutions, new-liberalism and democracy have been construed as the only way towards a prosperous and peaceful future.

As Jean and John L. Comaroff aptly demonstrated, at the turn of the century, in various parts of the world, capitalism was promoted in millennial terms, as the saving ideology and way of engaging markets. At that historic moment and in the contexts that they investigated, millennial capitalism was conflated with a cultural return to magic thinking and legalized forms of gambling under the guise of national lotteries, financial speculations, or risky investments. In the authors' words, the "messianic, millennial capitalism" of the turn of the century was a capitalism that "present[ed] itself as a gospel of salvation; a capitalism that, if rightly harnessed, is invested with the capacity to wholly transform the universe of the marginalized and disempowered" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2002, 292).

The gospel of Capitalism's second coming is consumption: in the late twentieth century, most modern states witnessed a loss of production and the demise of its "*perceived* salience for the wealth of nations" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000, 295). Instead, at least in the global North, the "wealth of the nation" has come from services, communication, entertainment and the flow of financial capital which is contingent on speculation. The protestant work ethic that, in Max Weber's account of the emergence and development of capitalism, was a facilitating success factor, has been replaced by the ethics of the casino, where there is no gain without major risks. As Jean and John Comaroff noticed, gambling "has changed moral valence and invaded everyday life across the world" through the popular participation in risky dealings in stocks, bonds and various funds and financial packages (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000, 295-296).

New-liberalism embeds a slew of contradictions that are particularly visible in post-revolutionary societies<sup>5</sup>: it both includes and marginalizes; it

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<sup>4</sup> Initiated on September 16, 2011, Occupy Wall-Street is developing into a social movement that aims to spread all over America as well as globally, by denouncing corporate greed and encouraging the engagement of local communities in dialogue for social change. In my opinion, this budding movement shares some of the ethos of the Students for a Democratic Society movement, which occasioned the formulation of the principle of participatory democracy in the Port Huron statement.

<sup>5</sup> Jean and John L. Comaroff use the term "post-revolutionary societies" to refer to societies that emerged from under totalitarian regimes in the late twentieth century and whose political, economical, social and material culture underwent epochal change (Comaroff & Comaroff 2000, 298).

produces global desires and expectations, yet it decreases personal safety, job security and job certainty; it increases class differences but decreases class consciousness; it appears to offer vast and almost instant returns to those who master its technologies and to threaten to erase – with its “invisible hand” – those who do not possess those technologies (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000, 298).

The internationalization of markets has withered the capacity of national state to control domestic economies; in this sense, nation states have been “rendered irrelevant by world markets” because of the velocity of capital and of the work-force (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000, 318-319). What is more, the increasing power of global corporations can prevail over state power and it allows global capital to influence changes in national laws. These changes aim to render national economies more permissive and more open to international corporations, more porous to foreign interests and as a result, to make them more vulnerable. These economic changes ultimately lead to “denationalization” (Sassen 2006, 1), as well as to the emergence of new “global assemblages” (Ong and Collier 2005).

Drawing on her ample sociological investigations of globalization, Saskia Sassen has posited that this phenomenon (i.e. globalization) is articulated within national boundaries to a larger extent than is usually acknowledged: “It is here that the most complex meanings of the global are being constituted, and the national is also often one of the key enablers and enactors of the emergent global scale” (Sassen 2006, 1). Globalization is frequently carried out through various “micro-processes” that “denationalize what had been constructed as national – whether policies, capital, political subjectivities, urban spaces, temporal frames, or any other of a variety of dynamics and domains”. Sometimes denationalization creates the conditions of possibility for the emergence of “new types of global scalings of dynamics and institutions” (Sassen 2006, 1). As a result, “global” and “national” are no longer mutually exclusive but they become increasingly intertwined: “The global economy to a large extent materializes in national territories; its topography moves between digital space and places in national territories” (Sassen 2006, 32).

Within the evolving framework of this dynamics, the state is currently called upon to regulate its own deregulation or re-regulation, in such a way as to produce (discursively) the legality of global business and to legitimize its operations. Quite frequently, nation states accommodate corporate interests by aligning the executive and legislative branches of state power with the logic of globalization (Sassen 2010, 144). If at the time of modernity, of the nation state and of classical liberalism, the nation state was a “bundled” assemblage of the nation and territory, state authority and citizen rights, currently the “unitary condition” on which the nation state had been premised can become unbundled and denationalized.

The tension between global and national interests, as well as their aggregation, is complicated by the ascendancy of local, regional and transnational interests and by the realization that, in a global world, there are

global stakeholders, global gains and global losses, global values and global impacts. In this sense, in the posited “global village,” the “butterfly effect” from chaos theory becomes increasingly acceptable as a metaphor to describe phenomena occurring at societal, environmental, economic or political level<sup>6</sup>.

### 3. A sociolinguistic framework of investigation

In the market place of ideas and interests, the winner is the one who knows how to construct a more persuasive argument. Sociolinguistics have identified a “linguistic turn” in social theory, which reflects the fact that in contemporary society, the exercise of power is achieved through the ideological operations of language (Fairclough 2001, 2). The major theorists who have influenced critical theory such as Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault and Jürgen Habermas (have) dwelt extensively on language or discourse in their theories. As Fairclough pointed out, language has become “perhaps the primary medium of social control and power” and it is called upon to serve various purposes; in addition, citizens are expected to master complex language capacities (Fairclough 2001, 2). This is so because democracies rely on consent rather than on coercion for the implementation of decisions made in the contexts of debates and deliberation, which involve skillful use of language. Since the manufacture of consent depends on ideology and ideologies are carried by discourse, one needs to critically investigate language in order to understand how power is exercised in society.

The critical investigation of language with a view to identifying its hidden mechanisms and the subtle imbrications of language, ideology and power can be carried out by resorting to the terminological tool-kit suggested by Critical Discourse Analysis. This theoretical framework feeds on Louis Althusser’s theories of ideology, on Mikhail Bakhtin’s theories of genre and on the philosophical traditions of the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci and of the so-called Frankfurt school (Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, Herbert Marcuse).

The theoretical assumptions of Critical Discourse Analysis combine neo-marxism with post-structuralism (via Michel Foucault’s philosophy). From Antonio Gramsci, Critical Discourse Analysis borrows the understanding of society’s political structure as dependent on a combination of “political/institutional and civil society.” In order to achieve a majority decision, collectives must be formed and crystallized around ideologies expressed in

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<sup>6</sup> In chaos theory, the butterfly effect refers to the sensitive dependence of an event on initial conditions. In nonlinear dynamical systems that operate in a chaotic regime, relatively small disturbances can yield disproportionate results effects (Kiel and Elliott 2004, 24). The butterfly effect takes its name from the title of a paper presented in 1972 by Edward Lorenz, a professor at MIT, in which he tackled the chaotic behavior in mathematical modeling of weather systems. The title of the paper was “Probability: Does the Flap of a Butterfly’s Wings in Brazil Set Off a Tornado in Texas?”

language. For Bakhtin and Volosinov, any instance of language use, not only institutional discourse, is ideological. In addition, any text or discourse is dependent on “repertoires of genres” (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, Vetter 2003, 145-146).

Critical Discourse Analysis conceptualizes discourse as “social practice determined by social structures” (Fairclough 2001, 14). The range of concerns for critical discourse analysts comprises “power, dominance, hegemony, inequality, and the discursive processes of their enactment, concealment, legitimation and reproduction” and “the subtle means by which text and talk manage the mind and manufacture consent, on the one hand, and articulate and sustain resistance and challenge, on the other” (van Dijk 1993, 132, quoted in Titscher, Meyer, Wodak and Vetter 2003, 147).

The conceptual apparatus that Critical Discourse Analysis has developed includes a few key terms, such as: *discursive event* (“instance of language use, analyzed as text, discursive practice, social practice”), *text* (“the written or spoken language produced in a discursive event;” Fairclough expanded the definition to include the visual aspect of texts in television), *interdiscursivity* (“the construction of a text from diverse discourses and genres”), *discourse* (as a countable noun, different from the abstract use of discourse as language use understood as social practice; it refers to a “way of signifying experience from a particular perspective”), *genre* (“use of language associated with a particular social activity”) and *order of discourse* (“totality of discursive practices of an institution and relationship between them”) (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak and Vetter 2003, 148). In addition, Critical Discourse Analysis draws on Halliday’s systemic linguistics by analyzing texts – in their increasingly multi-semiotic nature – as having three functions: (1) ideational, i.e. to represent experience and the world; (2) interpersonal, i.e. to constitute social interaction between participants in a discursive encounter; and (3) textual, i.e. to tie parts of a text together in order to constitute a coherent whole. The construction of meaning depends not only on what is explicit in the text but also on what is not eventually verbalized, i.e. on Levinson’s notions of presupposition and implicature. Analysis of the implicit content is extremely relevant in unpacking the ideological assumptions of a text.

The following chapter will dwell on the texts, discourses and genres used in pleading for or against the Roşia Montană project. In analysing them, I highlight an aspect that Critical Discourse Analysis foreshadows, namely the performativity of language use. John L. Austin’s philosophy of language broke away from the traditional understanding of language as purely referential and descriptive of “the real” to argue that language can create “the real” as well. In the William James lectures delivered at Harvard in 1955 and printed in 1962 as *How to Do Things with Words*, J. L. Austin brought into focus a type of utterances that had been ignored or, at the most, marginalized by both linguists and philosophers of language: utterances that are neither descriptive or constative (which were the linguists’ sole concern), nor non-sensical (in the



philosophers' understanding of the term). Their uttering "is, or is part of, the doing of an action, which [...] would not normally be described as saying something" (Austin 1962, 5). Austin calls these utterances performatives because rather than refer to something that already exists, they bring something into existence.

Austin identified a set of explicit performatives (sentences in the first person, using a verb in the present tense simple and involving acts of naming, declaring, proclaiming, etc). Yet he came to realize that performatives are implicit rather than explicit. In regular language use, any utterance is an implicit performative, which can become explicit through expansion, by adding a first person subject, a verb that names the discursive act performed through that statement, and the adverb "hereby". Thus, from designating a marginal set of utterances, the performative came to stand for an aspect of language in use, the sense in which "to say something is to do something" (Austin 1962, 91).

Going beyond the dichotomy between constatives and performatives, Austin established a triad of acts that occur simultaneously in speaking: the locutionary act, the illocutionary act, and the perlocutionary act. The act of saying something is a locutionary act. By saying something, a speaker also does something, and the performance of an act "*in* saying something" is an illocutionary act. Furthermore, *by* saying something and *in* saying something, a speaker produces "certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons," i.e. he or she performs a perlocutionary act (Austin 1962, 99-100).

From this perspective of performativity, rather than use the notion of *discursive event*, I prefer to use the term "discursive action" because it emphasizes human agency and a sense of purpose in engaging in acts that rely extensively on the use of language for pragmatic goals. In addition, in my subsequent analysis I also rely on the concept of frame – a travelling concept in sociology, cultural studies and linguistics that originated in Erving Goffman's methodology of social and semiotic analysis. For Goffman, a frame is loosely defined as the principles of organization that govern an event and organize a participant's subjective experience of it (Goffman 2004, 155). He argued that cultures generate *primary frameworks* "which render 'what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful' by offering a point of comparison, or a conceptual structure, through which people can digest information" (Fisher 1997, paragraph 2.2). In other words, frames are socially constructed schemata that allow humans to construct the meaning of situations and events.

Goffman contrasted the process of framing to the process of keying (or staging). Whereas frames organize information drawn from real experiences and actually existing people, situations and objects, keys only mimic primary frameworks. Humans key events for a variety of purposes: to practice for a (potential) future real performance; to reproduce and thus restate cultural knowledge about the world through rituals; to facilitate reflection on events,

people and objects, for instance in the medium of art or fiction; to package information into “transferable commodities,” for instance media articles, government reports, or academic studies; or in order to deceive. In this latter case, keys are “fabrications” through which a person or a group dupes another person or another group, and “illusions”, through which persons or groups delude themselves (Fisher 1997, paragraph 2.4).

David Snow, Robert Benford, and William Gamson applied frame analysis to the context of social movements in order to explore the ways in which the latter understand problems and present their perspectives to a wider audience. Their proposal that individuals can influence and control the frame according to which an event is interpreted is contrasted by the view shared by Teun Van Dijk, Donati, and Anna Triandafyllidou. From their point of view, frames are located at a deep, cognitive level over which neither charismatic leaders nor social movements or institutions can hold direct control (Fisher 1997, paragraphs 1.3 – 1.4).

In a more linguistic-oriented approach to frames, Teun Van Dijk Van Dijk argues that language, discourse, and social behavior are intimately bound to the cognitive processes that enable people to “perceive, interpret, organise, and represent their knowledge of the world,” i.e. to construct their social “reality.” He contrasts the study of language (structured in lexicons, semantics, grammars, syntax) envisioned as the study of the linguistic parts people use in order to construct a text) to the study of discourse (the level of “semantic superstructures” such as narratives, myths, arguments, or scientific reports) envisioned as the study of types of texts and of how people use texts in order to perform specific communicative purposes. At the level of language, the frame is the “smallest common denominator that subsumes all of the main elements” (Fisher 1997, paragraph 4.8; paragraph 4.12). At the level of discourse, the frame is the organizing principle that dictates the organization of a text so as to achieve a particular communicative goal.

#### **4. Pleading for and against the mining project**

The main discursive actor that has been pleading in favor of the mining project has been Roşia Montană Gold Corporation. In order to build its case, the company has been engaged in massive Public Relations activities and in Corporate Social Responsibility campaigns. The current name of the company is part of its Public Relations strategy itself, since originally it was called Euro Gold Resources S.A. In its current name, the focus is on both “Roşia Montană” and “gold”, and it conveys the company’s declared commitment to serve the local community. This change of title, as well as the well-orchestrated messages and declarations on the company’s website, stand in an intertextual relation with the complaints about the project, as direct answers to them and counter-arguments.

The company’s website identifies the “Roşia Montană Project” as a “Project for Romania”, thus denying, indirectly, the accusation that has been

brought to the project to serve the interests of a Canadian company and of its shareholders. The main titles of the company's website are "economy", "environment", "patrimony" and "community." Under these headings, the company engages in a discourse of persuasion framed by the same guiding idea that the mining project is a project for Romania. Under "economy", for instance, the site shows the estimated benefits for the Romanian state as amounting to 4.2 billion dollars (1.8 billion dollars would go to local and state budgets and 2.4 billion dollars would be spent in Romania on supplies, services and labor). Out of the estimated 7.5 revenue from the sale of gold and silver, the company would arguably gain 1.3 billion dollars, i.e. less than what the Romanian government would gain for the local and state budgets.

Under "environment" – a major issue around which opponents to the project have constructed their arguments – the company pledges to clean the water in the region (currently polluted with metals from previous mining exploitations) and to make local biodiversity "attractive" by planting more trees than will have to be cut and by creating the appropriate environment for birds and animals. In response to concerns over the use of cyanide in the company's operations, the website highlights the fact that 90 % of the gold currently extracted in the world is obtained through the same technology that will be used in Roșia Montană, and that this technology is safely implemented in the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Italy, Finland, Spain and Sweden.

Under "patrimony," the website mentions the current shabby condition of old mines and historical houses and their future accessibility and restoration that will make the community "proud of its cultural inheritance." Finally, under "community," the site lists the number of jobs that will be created for the construction of the mine and during the mining operations, as direct and indirect jobs. In addition, it lists the promises of modern infrastructure, and the construction of "the most modern village in Romania" which will be inhabited by the population that will be relocated.

The way in which the company communicates to the public is emphatic and hyperbolic. The project is "one of the most important industrial projects in Romania." The projected outcomes are expressed in a very assertive manner that leaves no room for doubt or uncertainties. Projected benefits are expressed in the present tense, as if the intended operations were already under way: "The Roșia Montană Project brings 4 billion USD into the Romanian economy." In addition, the site lists facts and figures: the number of jobs that will be created, the amount of money that will be spent or gained, the sums pledged for community development and for the preservation of the patrimony, the money invested by the company so far. This expression of current and foreseen outcomes in quantifiable terms constructs the perlocutionary effect of a pledge to carry out promises.

The company's website carefully supports the company's claims to legitimacy, responsible mining and commitment to operate in the interests of the

Roşia Montană community and of Romania. To this end, the website lists various experts' opinions, from statements by the "Worldwide Nr. 1 Expert in Cyanide" and the general rapporteur to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to a report made by "1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia and the opinions of a UNESCO consultant. What these experts argue is that the project will have a favorable economic impact; that cyanide has been safely used for more than a hundred years; that the project has an "overall beneficial environmental outcome" and that it can be considered an example of responsible mining. What is implied in their message is that ecologists and all the other parties who have been arguing or writing against the project have propagated ungrounded and exaggerated fears, and that rather than being a "villain," the company is a "hero" for the local community. In addition, the resort to the opinion of technocrats is part of the company's hegemonic campaign to elicit, through performative discursive acts, the consent of neutral parties or of those who have been opposing the project. The list of "frequently asked questions" shows that the corporation has already internalized criticism that has been fired at it throughout the years, has interpreted it as problems and has already found solutions that reframe problems as opportunities or as necessary social sacrifices that the company will compensate for<sup>7</sup>.

This self-presentation as a hero or, in line with Jean and John L. Comaroff's views expressed in the beginning of this article, as a savior who will solve all local problems and leave the site after it has turned it into a better place, is continued on the website of the Canadian company, Gabriel Resources<sup>8</sup>. The company was created precisely for the purpose of the "Project" in Romania, therefore it has no previous mining experience. Its major shareholders are five international companies who own 74 % of the company's shares. The remaining 26 % are free-floating, i.e. available for purchase on the stock market. Even though both websites cover, at ideational level, the same reality, i.e. a mining project, the interpersonal relation that they construct is different. Similarly, as extended, multi-modal and multi-semiotic complex texts, their illocutionary and perlocutionary acts are different. The discourse of both companies is constructed by experts in marketing and communication and it emphasizes programs of Corporate Social Responsibility.

An investigation of the Roşia Montană Gold Corporation's order of discourse highlights Fairclough's observation that the discourse of late

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<sup>7</sup> To give a few examples, against criticism that the project will destroy 10 churches, as opponents to the project initially argued, the current figure, on the company's website, is down to two churches and two houses of prayer. The company promises to build new churches for the relocated population and it has already started construction for a church in the new district Recea where the families who sold their homes and properties to the company have been relocated. In response to concerns over the destruction of cemeteries, the company pledges to pay for all re-burial services and to observe Romanian burial rituals with "respect and reverence."

<sup>8</sup> For legal issues, I cannot quote any information from the website nor analyze it in this article.

capitalism is marked by technologization.<sup>9</sup> In this particular case, the technologization is materialized in the professional engineering of language in a business context. It is also the direct result of the need to use language strategically<sup>10</sup>. Together, the technologization of discourse and the strategic use of language construct the effect of rationality behind intended social acts, in this particular case, behind the intended public support for the opening of the mine.

The implied audience of the communicative actions carried out through the website of the Roșia Montană Gold Corporation is mainly made up of Romanians, the Hungarian minority and possibly Hungarians in Hungary and current and potential shareholders and stakeholders. In a critical discourse perspective, what the website obscures is more telling than what is carefully designed and integrated as rational, reasonable and persuasive arguments. In order to preserve the slogan “a project for Romania” as a consistent frame, the website lists neither the major stockholders that make up Gabriel Resources, nor any criticism that local, national and international organizations have poured against the project. The website of the Roșia Montană Gold Corporation constructs the “community’s opinion” as entirely favorable: none of the attached open letters contains any criticism of the project. They appeal to local, national (Ministry of Environment) and international (UNESCO) institutions to allow the project to start its operations, and they ground their arguments in the local inhabitants’ right to work (the open letter from the Rroma community, the Pro Dreptatea NGO and the Mining Future Trading Union, dated April 2009). The open letter to UNESCO and Romanian state authorities, written on behalf of “communities in Alba County and Roșia Montană” performs the discursive action of condemning “the infringement of the principles of local autonomy and citizen consultation, as well as of the limitation of their right to work and to decent living” (letter available on [www.rmgc.ro](http://www.rmgc.ro)). In addition, the letter condemns “benefactors from a distance” who “cannot offer a viable alternative solution and use the “diversion of UNESCO listing for the single purpose of blocking the mining project.”

The most complex advertising campaign that the company has been engaged in has materialized in the production and circulation of videos on the major TV channels in Romania and on the internet. The series of six videos

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<sup>9</sup> Technologization of discourse is broadly defined as “a process of intervention in the sphere of discourse practices” as part of a general struggle “to impose restructured hegemonies in institutional practices and culture.” In Fairclough’s understanding, technologies of discourse are a variety of technologies of government, i.e. “the strategies, techniques and procedures by means of which different forces seek to render programmes operable, the networks and relays that connect the aspirations of authorities with the activities of individuals and groups”(Rose and Miller 1989, quoted in Fairclough 1995, 102).

<sup>10</sup> Habermas, in *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984), postulates a progressive colonization of the *Lebenswelt* (“lifeworld”) by the economy and the state. One immediate effect of such a colonization is the replacement of the use of language for communicative purposes by the use of language for strategic purposes. This instrumentalization of discourse embodies modern rationality and explains the use of language as communicative action.

framed as “letters to Romania” are finely articulated multimodal discursive acts as part of the company’s broader communicative action aimed to rally support for the mine. The videos are hybrid, interdiscursive acts that mix several genres and modes and articulate image and text (as well as webdesign, when they are embedded in web-pages). They are a form of advertisements keyed as testimonials that open a window on the everyday life of the local community. Advertised on the internet as “The true Roşia Montană,” the videos construct a multimodal discourse of authenticity whose protagonists are an 81-year old retired miner, an unemployed mother, a student of mining engineering, an unemployed young man, a young man who found work in Spain and supports his extended family, and a former miner who opened a tourist pension. The images and the sounds, the *mise-en-scène* and the close-up of hands in gestures of helplessness construct Roşia Montană as a destitute place, with no prospects and no opportunities other than the mining project. They rely on the emotional appeal of representations of social suffering anchored in “authentic,” common world-view settings in order to build solidarity with the sufferers and thus gain the public’s approval for the project.

Sociolinguists have identified a tendency in the media to draw on personal and social suffering. This hyper-presence of images of bodies in pain, of social destitution or emotional pain has turned suffering into a form of spectatorship that invites intimacy at a distance, celebrates communitarianism and democratizes responsibility (Chouliaraki 2006, 28). It constructs empathy from a distance and invites action or participation, if only in the form of “an internal whisper to himself” (Boltanski, quoted in Chouliaraki 2006, 30)<sup>11</sup>.

The vectors of the gaze in the videos show that they started as interviews; for most of the duration of the videos, the protagonists look away from the camera, into what we infer to be the eyes of the interviewer<sup>12</sup>. The viewer – from in front of the TV set or from in front of the computer – is thus made privy to a private conversation made public through the medium of the television or of the internet. The voice of the interviewed locals is heard as voice-over when the images show run-down houses, abandoned toys, broken gates, or crammed and barely decorated rooms, stoves and stacks of fire wood. The life stories unfold against this background that describes the setting and produce what in narratology has been termed “*effets du reel*,” i.e. they anchor painful life-stories into the natural and social environment. They retell a past glory and the thrill of finding gold decades ago; the hardship of working abroad in constructions so as to send money home and thus help the extended family pay their debts to the bank; the difficulty of bringing up two children and of keeping them in school, when the only income of the family is a small pension;

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<sup>11</sup> If we interpret the allegation in above-mentioned letter in light of Lillie Chouliaraki’s observation, being a “benefactor from a distance” is a predicament of the post-modern highly mediatic condition that constructs audiences as distant spectators to broadcasts of suffering.

<sup>12</sup> The “invisible hand” that holds the microphone and the camera is, symbolically, the hand of the company that paid for this highly professional campaign.

the impossibility of making a living from running a pension when tourism – the alternative for economic development suggested by opponents to the project – is not a viable means of making a living in the absence of the appropriate infrastructure.

The final sequences of the videos show the locals looking directly into the camera and verbalizing their address to all Romanians who have heard of Roșia Montană but have never been there: “Dear Romanians, I am addressing you, those who know about Roșia Montană from TV only. This large investment will bring prosperity to the area and the area will bring prosperity to Romania. Thank you for standing by us. We invite you to Roșia Montană” (Dorin Furdui); “I am asking everybody who comes to Roșia Montană or who has heard of Roșia Montană, to support us, to give us a chance to bring up our children because it is very difficult to have children, not to have a job or something to offer them or to offer them the minimum. It is painful for a parent, for a mother, it is painful to know that you cannot bring up your children ... I am asking all of you to give us a chance. Help us. This is an appeal, a cry... a despair...” (Sanda Lungu); “We need the mining project, we need jobs. Works must start so that the people in the area would have something to eat” (Carol Migneu). The videos end with a standard formula uttered by a woman, as voice-over: “The people from Roșia Montană want nothing else but to work”.

Instead of signature, the very last written message that is not, eventually, read out, identifies the agent(s) who endorse(s) the views expressed in the videos and describe the latter as “an initiative of the people from Roșia Montană supported by Roșia Montană Gold Corporation.” The categorical tone of this message implies that the entire community is in favor of the mining project. The word “supported” is a neutral term that tries to obscure the fact that the company paid for the videos, for the prime time when they are shown on TV and for the elaborate website [www.scrisoarecatreromania.ro](http://www.scrisoarecatreromania.ro). The visitors to this site are invited to engage an on-line public debate and share the stories with their friends or on the social networks on which they are registered.

Most on-line reactions to the videos embedded on the above mentioned website express support for the project. The occasional voices that draw attention to the fact that they are deliberately constructed with a view to winning the audience on the company’s side are rebuked as criticism that does not offer viable alternatives. In fact, the general agreement is that there is no alternative. This nihilist view that pegs the “salvation” of Roșia Montană on the mining project is shared by some politicians as well. One of its most active supporters has been the President of the country, who has visited the location several times (the last time, to my knowledge, in August 2011) and has endorsed the project. The President’s statements have framed the project as an impending need: “We need the gold from Roșia Montană. The Roșia Montană gold mining project must be carried out, because Romania needs gold for its national reserves” (statement made in September 2011, <http://www.thediplomat.ro/articol.php?id=2153>)<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Currently they amount to 103.7 tons. The President’s proposal is to increase it to 200 tons.

This need is justified, in the president's opinion, by the context of the financial crisis, the monetary instability and the fact that gold has emerged as a stable asset of increasing value that can buffer attacks against the national currency. In an appeal to "reason," the president resorted to a rhetorical question: "What country sits on such a fortune without looking for ways to bring it out?" (statement made in the same context as the one quoted above). In an indirect response to criticism to the project, the President argued that "Those who talk about environmental destruction should visit Roşia Montană now," and described the project as an example of responsible mining. The Prime Minister, who declared that he is not a "fan" of the project, argued for the need of renegotiations because in its current formula, the project is not the most advantageous to the Romanian state (<http://www.thediplomat.ro/articol.php?id=2153>). This view was shared in an earlier statement by President Basescu as well (Sulina 18 August 2011, <http://www.mediafax.ro/politic/basescu-proiectul-rosia-montana-trebuie-facut-dar-cu-renegocierea-partajarii-beneficiilor-8630726>), in which he also highlighted the need for the project to comply with EU regulations.

Basescu also declared that the government "must have the courage" to tell Romanians that the project must be carried out. The gold resource and its exploitation are framed by the president as a matter of national interest over which neither NGOs nor Hungary have any power of decision<sup>14</sup>. As a "sovereign state," Romania can decide on how to use its resources, argued the President. In reaction to the implicit accusation of political cowardice, Crin Antonescu, the leader of the National Liberal Party, blamed the President himself for not bringing the Roşia Montană case up in public discussion a few years ago. Currently, in Crin Antonescu's opinion, Roşia Montană is a "failed moment" (<http://www.ziare.com>).

If, for the President, starting the project and communicating its necessity is a matter of "courage", for politicians in opposition the support that the President and the leading coalition has shown is an example of corruption. The leader of the Social Democratic Party stated that the project "is blocked" because "not all politicians can be bought" ([www.hotnews.ro](http://www.hotnews.ro), 6 October 2011). This is an indirect accusation that endorsers of the project plead for it because they have a personal stake in the beginning of mining operations. Previously, the current President had accused the incumbent candidate that he had received support in his campaign from the company. The company itself has denied any involvement with any political party.

At European level, the project has been opposed by the representatives of the Romanian Social Democratic Party who authored a resolution, adopted by the European Parliament in 2010, to ban cyanide mining in Europe. In 2011, the European Commission refused to pass a similar resolution. European

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<sup>14</sup> Hungarian authorities have expressed their concern that the environmental hazard posed by the mine could be a threat to Hungary in case of a mining accident similar to the one in Baia Mare in 2000.



Commissioners were accused by the leader of the Romanian Social Democrats that they risk becoming “accomplices to the sacrifice of an entire region from Romania,” “accomplices to a social, economic and cultural disaster, an ecological disaster in an EU member country” (<http://www.catalinivan.ro>).

This statement captures the major concerns for which the project has been opposed by local NGOs as well. Alburnus Maior, the NGO that was founded in Roșia Montană as early as the year 2000 and that has been the most active opponent to the project, deconstructs on its website all claims made by the Roșia Montană Gold Corporation and by its supporters. In economic terms, the NGO’s argument is that should the project be implemented under the stipulations of the current contract, it would yield little money to the Romanian government. As a result of the juridical and economical status of Roșia Montană as a “disfavored” area, Roșia Montană Gold Corporation would be exempt from paying tax for 10 years and it is entitled to custom duty reductions. This would allow it to export gold and silver at production cost. The 2% royalties that the Romanian state would gain, as well as the taxation over employees’ wages, would be insignificant in comparison with what the company would cash in. The number of jobs has been contested as realistic because the more environmentally friendly the equipment the company will have to use in order to comply with environmental regulations, the more advanced it would be and the fewer employees it would require to be operated. Some of the jobs would be seasonal (for the construction phase) or temporal; the project would attract population from other areas as well (irrespective of the company’s commitment to train and hire locals). It is anticipated that when the mine closes, unemployment in the area could be higher than the current rate, as a result of migrant workers from other regions in the country who would lose their jobs.

Representatives of religious institutions have also expressed their opposition to the project because their churches and cemeteries would be affected. Moreover, the Romanian Academy adopted a Declaration in 2004 that brings twelve arguments to disprove the fact that the Roșia Montană project is a “work of public interest to the benefit of the Romanian economy.” This declaration points to abusive archeological discharges, to the potential destruction of cultural values and the destruction of the landscape, as well as to the “emblematic value” of the area for the nation<sup>15</sup>. It thus raises questions of cultural rights and cultural identity, of collateral social and cultural costs that no money can pay. The text contests the decisions of administrative authorities to declare Roșia Montană an industrial area – a performative act that obstructs the approval for small business licenses in other fields but mining – and offers the Academy’s support to “save” the region and contribute to finding alternative solutions for its economic development ([http://www.acad.ro/rosia\\_montana/pag\\_rm04\\_decl.htm](http://www.acad.ro/rosia_montana/pag_rm04_decl.htm)).

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<sup>15</sup> The region was home to Avram Iancu, the leader of the Romanians in Transylvania in their fight for freedom from the Austrian-Hungarian domination.

The various documentary films that were made about Roşia Montană (*The New Eldorado* (2007), *Roşia Montană: The Price of Gold* (2004) – ideologically against the project; *Mine Your Own Business* (2006) – in support of mining project and against environmentalists) frame their arguments in terms of the immediate need to act and “save” the region<sup>16</sup>. The on-line petition that is in the process of being signed as I am writing this article constructs a similar sense of immediacy: “Act now! The more we are, the more chances we stand to succeed!” (www.rosiamontana.net).

The petition and the report on which it is based (a report that draws public attention to the changes that will soon be discussed in Parliament with a view to modifying the Mining Law 85/2003 and thus make expropriation in the name of “public utility” a legal act) is authored by several NGOs from Romania (“Alburnus Maior”, “Salvati Bucurestiul”, “Transilvania Verde” and “Maimultverde”). On other occasions, initiatives of Alburnus Maior were backed by international environmental organizations such as Greenpeace, Earthworks, and Mining Watch. Stephanie Roth, a Swiss journalist has been lobbying against the project for years and she was awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize in the year 2005. She has been – allegedly – the driving force of a national coalition of NGOs, archeologists, academics and clerics to stop the mining project. Yet the project has not stopped. Several NGOs were set up in order to support the cause of the new mine and the locals’ right to work in mining (Pro Dreptatea, Pro Roşia Montană). Despite its national and international opposition, despite the EU Parliament’s resolution against the use of cyanide in mining and despite the withdrawal of support of World Bank’s International Finance Corporation in 2002, the “project” has remained a possibility, one that, in the context of the current crisis and higher gold price, seems closer than ever to become materialized.

## 5. Concluding remarks

At the moment when I am writing this article, what I have referred to as the “Roşia Montană case” has not been settled. Its inconclusiveness qualifies this article as work in progress. The complexity of the case lends itself to deeper investigations and more ample connections than I have made here. However, even though my conclusions are partial, they are relevant for the particular historic moment and political and economic context of the year 2011.

What this case highlights is that globalization co-exists with a global anti-globalization movement, whose vectors intersect and form territorialized

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<sup>16</sup> Quite significantly, in *The New Eldorado*, the founder of Alburnus Maior frames his NGO’s opposition to the mining project in terms of a democratic right to property that was hard won in 1989 through the revolutionary change from communism to democracy. To have the company or the state decide on expropriation and relocation would be a non-democratic act. Therefore, opposition to the mining project is not only an act of local resistance to the company but also an exercise in democracy that must be defended.

nexus. As a nexus of local, national, transnational, European, world and global interest, the Roşia Montană case raises questions about rights, authority, ownership, governance, democracy, local authority and state governance. The inhabitants who wish the project to start have a legitimate claim to the right to work and lead a decent life; the inhabitants who refuse to sell their property to the company and accept to be relocated have a constitutional right to own property and to dispose of it as they wish. Archeologists who – ironically – have made significant discoveries as part of the company's Alburnus Maior excavation project, have the right to decide on the future of their discoveries; the local community has the right to decide on a matter of local interest; since higher political authorities have declared it a matter of national interest, the entire nation should have a say in the final decision.

Thus, the Roşia Montană case reveals an overlapping of interests – sometimes conflicting, other times conjoint; an overlapping of globalizations (global corporate economy and global environmentalism) and an overlapping of public discourses that are skillfully tooled to accomplish strategic purposes and that are promotional above anything else. As Fairclough pointed out, the discourse of late modernity is colonized by promotional discourse as a result of the marketization and commodification of social life (Fairclough 1995, 138). In this context, discourse is tailored so as to fulfill the function of promotion and “sell” goods, services, as well as organizations, ideas or stories, as it is the case with the discourses that plead for or against the Roşia Montană case. What is more, in this tooling of discourse for strategic purposes, the relations between signified, signified and referent has altered.

Fairclough posits a change from signification-with-reference to signification-without-reference, and their coexistence. If in the former case there is a real object to which the signified is conceptually connected, in the latter case the “object” only exists at the level of discourse. This rupture in signification bears serious ethical implications, due to the impossibility to distinguish signification-with-reference from signification-without reference. The multiplying and ever different figures that have been used by both supporters and opponents of the “case” to build their arguments are, to my mind, a perfect example of “signification without reference.”

The ontology of a project is one of an improbable future, and its outcomes could match the current predictions or not. A variety of factors – the volatility of gold prices included, and even a “butterfly effect” – could easily prove the current predictions wrong, should the project be implemented. The amount of gold that will/could be extracted, its market value and the amount of money that will be spent in Romania or go directly into the public budget cannot be known. All figures, development and prosperity scenarios are predictions with no definite and actually-existing referent in the real-world, i.e. “significations without reference”. Similarly, the scenario of another environmental catastrophe posited on the model of the 2000 accident in Baia Mare is another instance of the same mode of signification in the risk society.

The case also shows that mediation has become a *sine qua non* in today's public life. From the imported Oprah shows and local talk shows to the videos in the "letter to Romania" series, personal reality is becoming public reality by informing personal feelings with "universal" values and rights (the right to work, the right to offer the best to one's children, the right to make a living in one's country). The interpersonal function of the videos as illocutionary acts construct empathy as the basis for the audience's action, i.e. support for the project. By staging suffering as performance and by eliciting empathy and pity, the videos aim to prompt viewers to join the "deliberative processes of the agora" (Chouliaraki 2006, 45). Whereas their circulation via TV channels can lead to no other action than what Boltanski called "an internal whisper to himself" (Chouliaraki 2006, 30), circulation on the internet, with links to email-services providers and social networks invite viewers to act as a community that shares similar interests and exercises its citizenship and allegiance to a cause by circulating the message and engaging in on-line discussions.

The increasing use of television and of the new media in the exercise of citizenship invites a reconsideration of the public sphere. In the classical understanding theorized by Habermas, the public sphere is a "realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body... Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion – that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions – about matters of general interest... Today newspapers, radio and television are the media of the public sphere" (Habermas 1964, 49). In Nancy Frazer's reformulation of Habermas' concept, the "public sphere" refers to "a theater in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk" (Frazer 1990, 57). Frazer also distinguishes between "weak publics" – "publics whose deliberative practice consists exclusively in opinion-formation" and "strong publics" – "publics whose discourse encompasses both opinion formation and decision-making," and which are embodied by sovereign parliaments (Frazer 1990, 75).

Participatory democracy carries the promise to bridge the weak public and the strong public by creating strong publics at local level. It has been proven to work in self-regulating institutions. When it comes to communities, the question that becomes an issue is that of the size of the community. The local community in Roșia Montană has the right to self-governance, and it has appealed to this right in the open letter written in order to protest attempts to list the site among the UNESCO protected monuments. Yet, the President's discursive move to frame the "case" as a matter of national interest, as well as the position of the Romanian Academy to deny it as operations of "public interest" beg for the case to be debated on a national scale. In this sense, the community that is entitled to act as a "strong public" is the entire nation and it could express its opinion through a referendum.

The argument that I have made above, that the Roșia Montană case displays an overlapping of globalizations, can be complemented by the argument that it also displays an overlapping of publics: the “weak public” of people who share an opinion, be it for or against the “project” and the strong public of decision-makers; the local public at community level, the national public now addressed by the “letter to Romania” and invited to act as an ally of the inhabitants of Roșia Montană who want “nothing but to work;” the European public, summoned by members of the Romanian delegation to adopt resolutions that ban the use of cyanide in Europe, as well as the international public that is invoked by both supporters of and opponents to the project and by the Academy, in its requirement for a neutral body of international experts who could design alternative development solutions.

In addition, as Lillie Chouliaraki has argued, the media not only express the opinion of the public; they also create publics and counter publics. The series of videos with testimonials and confessions by inhabitants of Roșia Montană address the Romanian public and construct it as an “imaginary community” (Anderson 1983) that is sensitive to the words of wisdom of an old miner, to the wet eyes of a proud mother or the sight of the empty rooms in Florea Bolog’s tourist pension. This public is constructed in the video’s interpersonal relation with it as a community made up of citizens who have a heart and a reasonable mind, and who can turn their “internal whisper” into a vocal act of support.

Similarly, the environmentalist-biased videos (of lower circulation in Romania than the videos whose production and distribution was “supported” by Roșia Montană Gold Corporation but of high profile abroad in the case of The New Eldorado) as well as the petitions that the NGOs have circulated, construct a public of environmentally-conscientious persons. This audience is constructed as a community that can think critically and consider the long-term effects of the project rather than the prospected and promised immediate deliverables. In its scope, it goes beyond the confines of the national state, through the creation of global networks of local activists. Digital networks thus enable the emergence of a global civil society and of a global public.

As Sassia Sasken noticed, local activists often use global campaigns and international organizations (as well as internationally renowned endorses, I should add) to secure rights from their national states<sup>17</sup>. What is more, “they now have the option to incorporate a non-national or global site in their national struggles” and to appeal to transnational courts for justice should the national state acted against their interest. These instances indicate, in Sassen’s view, the “emergence of a particular type of territoriality in the context of the imbrications of digital and non-digital conditions,” a territoriality that “partly inhabits specific sub-national spaces and partly gets constituted as a variety of somewhat

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<sup>17</sup> Actress Vanessa Redgrave has endorsed the Roșia Montană anti-mining cause. It is becoming common practice for celebrities to adopt a cause (see, for instance Paul McCartney’s endorsement of the cause to stop cruelty against animals, Demi Moore and Ashton Kutcher’s endorsement of the cause of young girls who are victims of human trafficking and prostitution, etc).

specialised or partial global publics” (Sassen 2010, 150). Thus, global digital networks and their embedded imaginaries and ideologies act as conditions of possibility for a global civil society that makes increasing demands for self-governance.

The social imaginary of the promoters of the development project conceptualize it as *the* solution that will “save” the area and enhance the Romanian economy, as well as send a positive message to foreign investors (view implied by the statement made by the Canadian ambassador in Romania on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November, [www.evz.ro](http://www.evz.ro)). The social imaginary of detractors of the project envision themselves as saviors as well. For the former, it is a matter of national interest to “save” Rosia by starting the mining project; for the latter it is a matter of national interest to “save” Rosia by preventing the project from being implemented. Thus, millennial capitalism co-exists with millennial environmentalist. Whereas the former demonize the latter as “men-haters” (position expressed by the directors of the *Mine Your Own Business* documentary) the latter demonize the former as greedy destroyers of landscape and cultural values. The discourse of both parties, as part of the common tendency within the order of discourse of late modernity to use language for strategic, promotional goals, is rife with proclamations of salvation and catastrophe, impending risks, the need to act responsibly and act immediately.

The involvement of the company in the community in order to personalize the homes in which villagers were or would be relocated, the support that it has given to archeological research and the restoration of a historical house in the protected area, as well as its collaboration with the local authorities, can be seen as an arguably successful exercise in both participatory democracy and self-governance at company and community level. In addition, the multiplying NGOs that support or oppose the case and their alliance behind their causes index the development of the civic society and further exercises in participatory democracy in which locally scaled practices are articulated with national and global dynamics.

The questions of governance, sustainability and accountability remain pertinent to the case. The ongoing discursive strife around the Roşia Montană case points to the relevance of place in economic globalization. It remains to be seen whether the geography of the place is to remain as it is now, or whether it will be utterly transformed by a major industrial project.

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- \*\*\* *Declaratia Academiei Romane în legătură cu proiectul de exploatare minieră de la Roşia Montană*, [http://www.acad.ro/rosia\\_montana/pag\\_rm04\\_decl.htm](http://www.acad.ro/rosia_montana/pag_rm04_decl.htm)

### Internet Resources

- [www.rmgc.ro](http://www.rmgc.ro)  
[www.rosiamontana.org](http://www.rosiamontana.org)  
[www.rosiamontana.net](http://www.rosiamontana.net)  
[www.scrisoarecatreromania.ro](http://www.scrisoarecatreromania.ro)  
[www.catalinivan.ro](http://www.catalinivan.ro)  
<http://www.kitco.com/charts/livegold.html>  
 "Mine Your Own Business" - Interview with Phelim McAleen, Ann McElhinney  
 available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBRZPqUIPNI>

### Newspaper articles

- DUMITROIU, O. "Crin Antonescu: Momentul Rosia Motana este ratat" published on 7 October 2011 and retrieved on 16 November 2011 at <http://www.ziare.com/crin-antonescu/usl/crin-antonescu-momentul-rosia-montana-este-ratat-interviu-ziare-com-1125427>

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