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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.