TO SELL OR NOT TO SELL

RESISTANCE TO NEO-LIBERAL GLOBALIZATION AND THE AESTHETIC POST-COMMUNIST SUBJECT

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ABSTRACT

How does one articulate resistance to neoliberal globalization in a post-communist context? In my dissertation I address the ambiguous encounter between the moral and the commercial economy by looking at the ongoing Transylvanian controversy in Rosia Montana. Examining the ambiguity within the discursive practices (re)producing both Rosia Montana (as an object of commodification) and Rosienii (as subjects) in dichotomous representations, I illustrate how selling or preserving land in the new global economy is not a simple ‘economic’ choice.

While the corporate supporters attempt to produce the image of a troubled space in need of aid – thus essentializing what a Rosian means by appealing to a proletarian consciousness of the miner occupation - NGOs are producing the ‘Save Rosia Montana’ campaign by appealing to a pristine/peasantry essence and to the ‘liberal rights’ discourse. While a prevailing narrative among the Rosienii is reiterating motifs of sacred spirituality, all these representations are rather unstable and blurred in everyday life. Interviews, personal stories and quotations of media texts will illustrate how Rosienii are seduced by the various ideological discourses attempting to arrest the experience of Rosia and how ‘partitioning’ their sensible experience is rather contentious. My argument is that resistance is to be viewed aesthetically as it eludes certainty; political subjectivities are mobile and events of subjectification are unstable. The paradoxes of this encounter are important in terms of continuities and similarities between capitalism and the totalitarian experiment of Eastern Europe, making the discourse of ‘post-communism’ more complicated than it is traditionally presented.

On the one hand, one can see the Rosia Montana case as a ‘successful social (environmental) movement’ not only because it managed to create ways to block the corporation for almost ten years but also because it attracted the support of many people from all over Romania (and elsewhere) who have become interested in the area and (even) visited it: the call had very much to do with the perception that the corporate project is a mockery and that Romanian politicians are profiting out of it. The 2010 HayFest mirrored the desired alternatives for the region: entitled “Rosia Montana, as a Big Stage”, it gathered people from all over Romania as well as other countries for workshops, political debates, traditional food-shops, eco-entertainment activities, touristic visits etc.
On the other hand, the ‘bread and butter’ arguments are widespread too, because of lingering scarcity of (financial) resources; these indeed, make resistance to economic development projects unpalatable. Surely the anxiety and the insecurities Rosienii experience are nothing new in the milieu of human reactions to modernity’s disruptions. In the Rosia context, the prevailing feeling is that nothing/no one can offer solutions to ease the pains of these disruptions (‘the state is silent and corrupt’, ‘capitalists only want money in their pocket’). Neither the market nor the state is trusted to address grievances. There is a widespread feeling that either selling of preserving their valuables, they deal with a non-choice.

While the formal activism against the corporate project attempts to naturalize its side of the ‘truth’ in contrast with the ‘truth’ exposed by the corporation, the differend of Rosia Montana becomes visible in the stories of Rosienii. Reluctant to being called ‘activists’, their everyday struggle is both reinforcing and subverting the ‘truths’ of this controversy by introducing the ‘variable’ of ambiguity. The personal stories reproduced in this dissertation show that both national feelings of rootedness or the support for corporate mining are not forms of closed ideological engagement (of nationalism or neo-liberalism) manipulated towards some programmatic ends. The narratives of people do not simply reveal anti-modern/anti-industrial sentiments just as they do not reveal some blind credulity in the mantra of the market; they do not simply display allegiance to an ideology or another. Self-identification is volatile and unstable. As my interviews will show, there is a strong sense of living the ‘drama of uncertainty’.

Representation of both the space and identities is fluid: there is no fixed Rosia as a discursive space; ‘who is Rosia’ and ‘who are the Rosieni’ is continuously a matter of dispute. There is no intelligible (ideological) discourse to Rosieni’s feelings and inner tensions, loyalties being divided and uncertain, contradictory and shifting. Dissensus, rather than consensus, heterogeneity rather than homogeneity characterizes the politics of post-communist Rosia Montana; paying attention to this aesthetic resistance may create free spaces for imagining alternative possibilities.
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Preface and Acknowledgement

I started to think about resistance to capitalism in 2002 when I was an undergraduate student at the University of Bucharest in Romania: often times I could see on TV reports about many youngsters in the West breaking the windows of Starbucks or other big corporations. Similar images were coming up in my mind as memories of the Revolution in 1989, when my brothers went to the streets to ‘fight against the dictator’. But somehow, I could not really grasp the anger of the young people fighting against a company. I did not know how to feel about these movements that were criticizing the exact values others were willing to die for.

This confusing feeling I had was coming out of an inner tension: first, I believed this new capitalist system was the best the world can have, it was the system many Romanians died for as my brothers could have died; second, I felt that my retired father was going crazy to be a little nostalgic after some aspects of the past and of the communist regime. It seemed ‘shameful/dangerous’ to criticize the new capitalist regime for its deficiencies. I preferred to hide this feeling: denying this nostalgia, as a dangerous and ridiculous attitude, was, after all, predominant around me and in the mass-media. There was no point in thinking of the past and for a long time I was oblivious to thinking otherwise. The ‘right’ to nostalgia was not granted.

Following my subsequent travels and stays in the UK and the USA, I was further intrigued by the aversion of people I met towards the capitalist regime. I was supposed to study abroad and come back with virtuous and efficient Western solutions to political problems that will eventually help my ‘poor’ country. Instead, I returned questioning these exact solutions as well as the idea of a ‘solution’ itself.

The story of my dissertation tries to capture this exact tension as I read it in the words and attitudes of other people, the Rosienii in Rosia Montana – Transylvania, who remind me about my father, a worker captured in-between two worlds of both joys and sorrows, regrets and ironies about his own situated(ness) in the (post)-communist societies. I remember how he was saying: we were screwed up by both the communists and the capitalists, we lost then and we lose now.
This is, therefore, a ‘thanks’ for my parents: my father for inspiring me to think about politics and ideologies from the viewpoint of his proletarian life; to my mother who painfully made me feel the rupture between a rural and an urban life: a woman uprooted from her traditional village during communism, a working-mother and a woman surviving two regimes of (bio)power.

This dissertation exists thanks to my wonderful professors who were curious and enthusiastic about my stories, patient enough to understand and listen to my complaints and fears: Mike Shapiro, who first welcomed me in the Department, who always encouraged me and whose writings captivated me; Jon Goldberg Hiller, whose analytical exigencies inspired me to think twice and look deeper into the issues I researched; Sankaran Krishna whose guided me when I was lost, in a pragmatic and skillful way; Nevzat Soguk, whose friendship made me be more confident and get a larger perspective on the possibilities of an ‘immigrant soul’. I feel happy and proud I met my professors in a crucial time of my life; their work and their ways of being inspired me in my life beyond academia.

Moreover, I wish to thank some of my wonderful friends who made my life more beautiful: Despina Dumitrica, Sam Opondo, Eric Bettis, Ingrid Vasilescu, John Friend, Ana and Silvia Pasti, Andrei and Andreea Ogrezeanu, James Jones, Melisa Casumbal, Keith Lorenz.
THE STORY OF A DIFFEREND

The following conversation took place between two inhabitants of Rosia Montana, Transylvania.

“B: To me, those who have sold their houses, taken away their dead because they have received money for this cannot be considered human. For someone to sell their dead, now that’s an odious, unacceptable thing! Don’t you think that one day there will be no more gold left? And don’t you think that you may die before reaching my age?! Look how sick the mine has made me!

E: It isn’t in my power to decide what the future will be like. For this there are other people, who have the knowledge to do this. Anyway, what future? You simply don’t have an alternative to mining. Alburnus Maior told us to pick berries, but that’s a one-month job! Then there was the idea of a milk processing plant and a sawmill, but with whose cows and what wood?! Alburnus has only been giving me words for five years. With words I can’t feed my family. GOLD gives me something real”.¹

This conversation is not peculiar to Rosia Montana. In the last few years there has been an increasing perception that corporate Western elites have the power to define the conditions of possibility for Romania to exist. In the case of Rosia, this existence would mean a future a mono-industrial mining. At least, a near future until the temptation to fully exploit the gold of the area is satisfied. In 1998, this temptation has incited a Canadian corporation to propose the project for one of the largest cyanide open cast mine in Europe. Ever since, Rosienii are torn between the choice of selling their land and the struggle to preserve it. This micro-level ‘negotiation’ of future lives reflects the macro-level negotiation between the ‘East’ and the ‘West’ where the former appears as passive consumer of arbitrarily imposed conditions. Reifying market relations

¹Kristóf, Szombati, The spell of Gold: Affective politics and the will to hegemony in a Transylvanian mining community.” Master’s thesis submitted to Darwin College.
– that ‘something real’ which the corporation, and not the state, can now offer - is still a ‘success’ story despite the opposition and ambivalence against it. It is therefore no surprise that academic studies on post-communism are generally focused on the ‘transition’ to liberal democracy and market economy as a virtuous and linear journey. Moreover, the academic literature on ‘resistance to neo-liberal globalization’ is focused mainly on Latin or North America and South-East Asia while Central and Eastern Europe is usually left out.² My dissertation is an attempt to answer the question: how does one articulate resistance to neoliberal globalization in a post-communist context where major concepts such as democracy, capitalism or socialism are already taken for granted?

In 2007 I travelled to Rosia Montana by bus and I often overheard: “we will sell our country …we will be the new slaves…” Although former communist countries do not share the (anti)colonial discourse, I started to think of what prompts these comparisons. Rosia is one of the mining places that sit on gold and other metals, a semi-urban village archeologically documented as the oldest locality of Romania. Its gold treasure has been an attraction ever since ancient times, when the Daci, ancestors of Romanians, were producing jewelry for the Roman Empire.

Soon after the initial enthusiasm for foreign investment, Rosienii understood that the new corporate project endangers their lives and homes. Therefore, they organized themselves into a local NGO called Alburnus Maior and challenged the corporation with the support of national and international NGOs and other institutions. Their protests echoed the ‘not for sale’ discourse

of global movements, criticizing corporate conduct, the social and environmental costs of
economic development, and the corrupt complicity between the state and the corporation.

My initial stay in Rosia led me to the conclusion that there has been an overwhelming
feeling of moral indignation among Rosieni regarding the conduct of the corporation and of the
state. The corporation has been perceived as fraudulent and the state as a silent accomplice. One
can, thus, argue that the ‘who is to blame?’ question is already answered and the rationale for
engaging in a cultural struggle seems obvious. A set of varied and complex means of actions
have been employed by the opposition movement in Rosia and succeeded in blocking the
 corporate project for more than ten years; these may be seen, in Ranciere’s words, as acts of
‘subjectification’ when those who had no part, become visible as political subjects restructuring
the field of (Rosia’s) experience. In this process, traditional representations of Rosienii have
been challenged. Peasants and/or miners have had to break their habitual sense of self and life,
reinvent themselves in multiple ways as entrepreneurs, NGO activists, touristic guides,
marketing persons, poets or actors. The 2010 HayFest mirrored these desired alternatives:
entitled “Rosia Montana, as a Big Stage”, it gathered people from all over Romania as well as
other countries for workshops, debates, eco-entertainment activities, touristic visits etc.

One can see this as a ‘successful movement’ not only because it managed to create ways
to block the corporation and attracted the support of many people from all over Romania (and
elsewhere). But these attempts at subjectification have been constantly challenged by (inner)
tensions, antagonisms and instability. The ‘bread and butter’ arguments have been widespread,
given the lingering scarcity of (financial) resources; these indeed, make resistance to economic
development projects unpalatable. Surely the anxiety and the insecurities that the Rosienii

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Jacques Ranciere, *Dis-agreement, Politics and Philosophy*, (Minnesota University of Minnesota Press, 1999), pp. 11, 35.
experience are nothing new in the milieu of human reactions to modernity’s disruptions.

However, in the Rosia context, the prevailing feeling is that nothing/no one can offer solutions to ease the pains of these disruptions (‘the state is silent and corrupt’, ‘capitalists only want money in their pocket’). Neither the market nor the state is trusted to address their grievances. Therefore, there is a widespread feeling that either selling or preserving their valuables, they deal with a non-choice. In 2011, there is still no fixed arrest of representation of Rosia as a discursive space; ‘who is Rosia’ and ‘who are the Rosieni’ is continuously a matter of dispute. In Ranciere’s words, the ‘partition of the sensible’ is contentious. What are the feelings one ‘should’ or ‘should not’ feel? The two events described below illustrate this:

In January 2011, the members of the “Save Rosia Montana” coalition made an appeal to the decision-makers in Romania to propose the inclusion of Rosia in the UNESCO Patrimony. The current mayor of Rosia, Eugen Furdui, opposes, arguing that this is done merely to block the mining project rather than out of true interest for Rosia’s future and prosperity.

In February, 2011 the opposition to the corporation celebrated 1880 years of historical documented certification of Rosia Montana as the oldest documented locality of Romania. The city-mayor refused to celebrate, arguing that the ‘real local’ celebration was the Miner’s Day, celebrated every year with the financial support of the corporation, in the last Sunday of August.

Events of subjectification have been unstable for various reasons: first, they are meeting the inhibitions of political economy - there is a widespread feeling of embarrassment or shame to confront the corporate discourse with a nationalist, socialist or even ecologist counter-discourse. These ideological stances had supposedly been discredited by Ceausescu’s regime and thus, any nostalgia is being demonized; in addition, ecologist values are widely viewed as Western fussiness, irrelevant for a society that still needs modernization. I ask: How are these discursive regimes producing the ‘reality’ of Rosia and of Rosienii? How do they influence resistance or allegiance? While the corporate camp attempts to produce the image of a troubled space in need of aid – thus essentializing what a Rosian means by appealing to a proletarian consciousness of
the miner occupation - NGOs are producing the ‘Save Rosia Montana’ campaign by appealing to a pristine/peasantry essence and to the ‘liberal rights’ discourse. While a prevailing narrative among the Rosienii is reiterating motifs of sacred spirituality, all these representations are rather unstable and blurred in everyday life. Interviews, personal stories and quotations of media texts will illustrate how Rosienii are ambiguously seduced by the various ideological discourses attempting to arrest the experience of Rosia. Subaltern consciousness (peasant or proletariat) as a ‘thing’ to be disclosed or as a unified collective is susceptible to elusiveness. A presupposed ‘solidarity’ of such a group – as a signifier of its consciousness – is the first step to assimilating resistance (rebellion or revolt of the subaltern) to some hegemonic narrative, be it the ‘nation’ or the ‘ecologists’. As Guha and Spivak argue, “The peasant’s view of the struggle will probably never be recovered, and whatever we say about it at this stage must be very tentative”.4

Second, in the last ten years, more than half of Rosienii agreed to sell their land for various reasons” lack of jobs or profit (by declaring the area mono-industrial, different economic investments or activities were banned), desires for a different lifestyle away from the tensioned situation, children’s needs to attend different schools etc. One could ask what is the point of talking about ‘resistance’ since the majority of the Rosienii have ‘surrendered’ to the marketplace logic? Resistance against the ‘enemy’ has in itself been an ambiguous attitude: making (or rather keeping) the ‘we’ more important than the individual has been very difficult. Plus, another concern has been raised: who are the ‘victims”? Who is the ‘common enemy”? These issues made me look at the Rosia controversy as a ‘differend’: (in Lyotard’s words), a conflict that cannot be confined to the rules of ‘cognitive phrases’, of truth and falsehood.5 From this perspective, both parties seem stuck in ‘playing the victim’s game. Rosienii that wish to

preserve their land accuse the corporate supporters of being ‘materialistic’ and interested in short-term financial gains. Supporters of the mining project accuse the opponents of being hostile to job-creation and modern development. Convincing evidence for both the ‘victims’ can always be provided within the borders of their respective genre of discourse. But either selling or preserving land, one cannot appraise the probity of these choices because there is no universal ‘moral’ frame to adjudicate them.

Many Rosieni ask: So, what now? The corporation has been blocked for more than ten years but what about ‘us’ and the village? Displaced Rosieni often appear in the media lamenting their loss. There is overwhelming uncertainty about what ‘success’ or ‘change’ mean and widespread frustration that Romania has no rule to stir ‘responsible’ development in support of the people. Therefore, awareness about the impossibility to ‘name’ a ‘real’ victim/traitor/enemy/community has been growing. Dichotomies have gradually been loosen and blurred. In the last few years a perception of ‘stand-by’, inertia or numbness of definitive action/decision has characterized Rosia Montana: as Rosienii say, nothing is happening in Rosia, ‘we are on stand-by’. The complex legal and environmental problems associated with the mine and the opposition emerging has postponed any political/legal decision while other economic activities were banned. This may be seen as a disruption, a ‘break”, a silence following a search for answers not yet found by humanity about what development/prosperity could be all about and the alternatives to industrialism. The situation mirrors the hole in the national flag that the ‘revolutionaries’ in 1989 were happily waving as a symbol for another order that has not yet been “homogenized by any positive ideological project”.

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The dissertation is looking at the discursive practices reproducing both Rosia Montana (as an object of commodification) and Rosienii (as subjects and identities), and essentializing the imaginary into dichotomous representations. My argument is that both resistance and support for the corporation is ambiguous and should thus be viewed aesthetically. My observation is that Rosienii see their subjectivity as both produced (imposed/manufactured) and 'natural' (realizing it as participant in self-relationship to the 'real'). There are scenes and images I witnessed during my fieldwork that undermine and contradict the verbalized self-understanding of Rosienii themselves, the stories they express and/or the stories they think they are in. By telling various and often conflicting ‘truths’ about themselves and by ambiguously appealing to various ideological meanings, Rosienii are resisting the fixity imposed by power/truth (discursive) regimes be them past or present, nationalist or neo-liberal, communist or ecologist challenging static versions of truths. Knowledge (about self) is a power-related practice\(^7\): what Rosienii know about them and reproduce in stories is a reflection of power/truth regimes but there is also awareness of the socially embedded self which makes any definitive resistance or acceptance, problematic.

Personal stories show that representations are blurred by the ambiguities of everyday life. Reluctant to being called ‘activists’, their everyday struggle is both reinforcing and subverting the ‘truths’ of this controversy by introducing the variable of ambiguity. The personal stories reproduced in this dissertation show that both national feelings of rootedness and the support for corporate mining are not forms of closed ideological engagement (of nationalism or neo-liberalism) manipulated towards some programmatic ends. The narratives of people do not simply reveal anti-modern/anti-industrial sentiments just as they do not reveal some blind credulity in the mantra of the market; they do not

simply display allegiance to an ideology or another. Therefore, self-identification is volatile and unstable. As the interviews will show, there is a strong sense of living the ‘drama of uncertainty’ both at the macro- and micro-level which makes Rosienii’ feelings unstable and difficult to understand or label. Here, both cognitive and emotional ‘attachments’ are blurred by the uncertainty of structural changes.

The story of Rosia is therefore multiple, fluid, fractured and complex. Portraying a version of the ‘truth’ about Rosia would otherwise become a totalizing practice, produced and reproduced continuously in language and action – as opposed to one practice among other possibilities. As Shapiro argued, “no representation is innocent of practice” and there is violence in the conviction that one possesses the ‘truth’. For example, the current director of RMGC, Dragos Tanase, invoked the community and, implicitly, its ability to act as a pressure group. He was asked what will happen to those residents of Roşia Montana who refuse to sell their properties. Tanase’s answer was illustrative: “we will discuss with the local community to find solutions to convince everybody” to sell their properties. His answer first contains a presupposition of a (homogenous) community; To establish the ‘reality’ of Rosia by either sides has meant to extend a certain protocol to the whole of Rosia and imply that there is some sort of generally accepted ‘national ego’ or sensus communis. Second, it also presupposes that (or ignores the fact that) “convincing everybody”, i.e. achieving (near)-consensus on selling properties could be possible without repression of differences. In other words, inventing a ‘real’ community and purging it of all ambiguity assumes the role of a single, unique option rather than constitute only one possible road satisfying one regime of truth and power.

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The ‘differend’ reveals Rosia as both an object of cognition (to be observed) and the object of an idea (to be imagined): in the former case, Rosia is an object of commodification, marketization, exploitation, that is, subject to a protocol established by a power-authority (be it the state or the corporation or the NGOs); in the latter case, Rosia is an idea/concept imagined by a heterogeneous group of people living and contesting the objects of cognition; here, no protocol of judgment could be established without committing wrongs to some parties and without appeal to a sort of totalitarian adjudicating. Ideas such as community, prosperity/poverty, labor, rights, proletarian, peasant, are in themselves discursively represented and hence contested. Despite attempts to transform the differend into a multitude of litigations over objects of cognition subjected to the protocol of economics and law, ‘truths’ about Rosia are still to be imagined.

We doubt that it is possible to interpret without frames/regimes of truths - frames are also constructed in the milieu of Rosia Montana. If one is looking for coherence one can read it in the various frames of interpretations/regimes of truths. These frames actually abound: (neo)liberal, nationalist, environmentalist, nostalgic communist, etc. There are signifiers to the signified Rosia Montana but one can also consider a loss when visualizing one instead of multiple signified: “What is to be feared in representation is not the signified but the absence of critique, of skepticism, of negotiation, that is, the absence of competition between signifieds.”10 Fluidity and unsettled internalization is here more relevant for an aesthetic resistance predicated on dissensus, multiplicity and heterogeneity. As Lyotard argues “The problem of language, thus posited in terms of communication, leads to that of the needs and beliefs of interlocutors”11 How can one probe the truth of a belief or of a desire without already presupposing a certain a priori regime of

11 Lyotard, The Differend, p. 12
truth? In this sense, I view this differend aesthetically, “as the system of a priori forms determining what presents itself to sense experience”.\footnote{Ranciere, The Politics of Aesthetics, p. 13.}

This dissertation asks: How does one articulate resistance to neoliberal globalization in a post-socialist context? The relevance of this question comes not only from its novelty within the milieu of post-communism but also for its global reach. Nowadays, the doubts over the virtues of (neo)-liberalism are more visible in a multitude of venues. Despite more intensified discontent, the alternatives are yet postpones and the world seems to be living on a prolonged ‘stand-by’. The critical situation of the Rosienii also illustrates this (global) expectancy or suspense while photographically drawing landscapes of ambiguity in terms of thoughts and feelings about it. In this corner of Transylvania, alternatives to global capitalism are called for.

**Inhibitions of Political Economy: Post-communism, Balkanism and Developmentalism**

*The relationship of postcolonial theory to the Balkan as metaphor is a critical task for our world*\footnote{Gayatri Spivak quoted in Maria Nikolaeva Todorova, Imagining the Balkans, Updated ed.,( New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 193.}

*Poland cannot permit itself the luxury of ideological experiments anymore. (Polish Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, 1990)*

After 1989, economic, social or environmental problems in Eastern Europe have mainly been attributed to a lack of capitalism, being retarded by communism’s institutionalized narratives about the misdeeds of capitalism.\footnote{Tamás Gáspár, Miklos. “Being on the Left in Eastern Europe” in RedWine, March 19, 2006 \texttt{http://redwinesblog.blogspot.com/2006/03/being-on-left-in-eastern-europe.html}, accessed on 08.02.2006.} The ‘inevitability’ and desirability of capitalist
market and liberal democracy has not generally been questioned. One can connect the ‘peaceful’ “transition” to capitalism with the fact that the Eastern Europe does not share the colonial discourse animating many ex-Third World countries and their anti-globalization discourses. Globalization in the Eastern bloc context has been strongly equated with membership in the EU or other international organizations; consequently, the prevailing need has been that of Western recognition, acceptance and support. Even the shocks of privatization, the social and economic insecurities, and new forms of poverty have been presented as inevitable and conducive to a better life.

Rosia Montana is, thus, one more illustration that fits this pattern: it was meant to become a globalized place, dependent on extra-local centers of power, integrated into a network of investments and information; otherwise, it could slowly die unless “alternative” development paths are proposed. This has been the liberal vision shared by international financial institutions which shaped Romanian industrial policy after 1990. The liberal reforms in the mining industry took place under the auspices of the European Union and the IMF and the common ‘wisdom’ (among elites) was that mining, as other industries, had to be fundamentally restructured, which, in most cases, involved closures and privatizations.

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. In 1995, the mining industry in Romania employed 190,000 workers, who had a total number of (about) 600,000 dependants. The World Bank was to provide the expertise and the financial means for alleviating the social effects of mine closures.15

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15 A report released by the World Bank office in Romania on the restructuring of the mining sector (March 1998) draws attention to two foreign private investors which have been active in forming joint ventures with the AAs in Deva and Baia Mare. These are
In this context, Romania, as other Eastern European countries, has been one of the many bargains to be exploited for cheap labor, soft environmental and social/labor standards, where the corrupt bureaucracies could function as a facility. This new capitalism was viewed as a natural completion of similar transformations brought by capitalist missionaries preaching global developmentalism:

The economies of the South are . . . being reopened to mining TNCs [transnational corporations] through structural adjustment and the liberalization of the global economy. Under pressure from the IMF and the World Bank, more than 70 countries have changed their mining laws to make themselves more attractive to foreign investment; foreign ownership restrictions have been watered down or abolished; and mining TNCs are being invited to bid for state-owned mining assets, as huge sections of the industry . . . are being offered for sale under ‘free market’ privatization programmes.  

In sum, the strategy of the Romanian state for restructuring the relatively large mining sector of Romania was either to close down the mines or to create the conditions for attracting foreign investments. No surprise that quickly after the arrival of the Euro Gold Corporation in Rosia, its representation as a unique ‘savior’ has been perpetuated through institutional settings (state, media and corporate) creating a feeling that without this project the region can slip into the new periphery, excluded from investment and development.

Part of a tradition of working classes, the miners have always been a symbolic powerful force that historically struggled for state concessions and labor rights. The Jiului Valley was a ferment of mining militancy in Romania: in 1977, a strike by the coalminers was a serious.

Gabriel Resources, which created the “Roşia Montana Gold Corporation” and “Esmeralda Exploration” which created the “Aurul” mining company. The report mentions that the companies are “small” but given their combined investment of $12 million, they seem to represent a hopeful sign for the generally bleak situation of the Romanian mining industry. See M Larionescu et al., Through the eyes of a Miner: The mining reform in Romania (Sociological Evaluations and Case-studies) my translation from Cu ochii minerului, Reforma mineritului în România (Evaluări sociologice si studii de caz), (Bucharest, Gnosis, 1999), p. xx.

Moody, 1996, p. 46
challenge for the Ceausescu regime, compelled to address their demands.\textsuperscript{17} However, the ‘invisible hand’ regime of power moralized labor conflicts as legacies of communism:

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.\textsuperscript{18}

In this context, much of the literature on post-communism focused merely on the region’s need to transition to liberal democracy and capitalism and assessed this transition as ‘corrupt’, i.e., insufficiently capitalist because of local authoritarian legacies. According to mainstream opinions, ventured capitalists have been contaminated through dubious deals with the former nomenklatura which would supposedly explain the tainted nature of the ‘new capitalism’. The ‘real’ capitalism is, therefore, yet to come after an extensive hunt for (and cleansing of) communist scapegoats.

As famous Romanian liberal intellectual Vladimir Tismaneanu argues, the political and moral vacuum in which this part of the world was catapulted after 1989 only has two options to be filled: it will either be liberal or it will tragically end up in new varieties of authoritarianism. Thus, the only ‘resistance’ against neo-liberal capital economy that this region could supposedly produce is the resistance of extremist ideologies, to be viewed as a dangerous.

In all these societies, movements and parties have emerged that romanticize the past, idealize authoritarian traditions, and deprecate parliamentarism. (…) The anti-capitalist and anti-democratic sentiments, including paternalistic, corporatist and populist nostalgias, could coalesce in new authoritarian experiments.\textsuperscript{19}

From this perspective of the official discursive regime, one can, perhaps, consider that the answer to the question of this dissertation has been already provided and that resistance to neo-

\textsuperscript{17} Larionescu et al. \textit{Through the eyes of a Miner}.
\textsuperscript{18} Friedman, 2007, p. 422
liberal globalization is a defensive reaction motivated by insecurities of transition and articulated in the ideological language of communism, nationalism or other extremist ghosts of the past. As Ranciere critically argues, in the era of consumerist democracy, whatever resists the effacement of “the political under the exigencies of the limitlessness of global Capital” is to be stigmatized as backward and populist.\(^{20}\)

We can also add the Balkanist vein of this official discourse: Tismaneanu is speaking of some sort of xenophobic subculture, a disease that, according to him, has always lingered within these societies and impairs liberal tolerant thinking.

Labeling resistance to corporate globalization in Romania as anti-modern and extreme could be seen as a perpetuation of the Balkanist fashion. By ‘Balkanist’ we refer here to the common description of Central and Eastern Europe as never quite developed, never quite civilized, semi-oriental, quasi-colonial, a periphery of Europe. This form of Balkanism has been internalized and perpetuated by Rosieni also) who are ready to internalize this visitor’s (imagined) normative gaze assuming that perceptive (mainly Western) travelers can see through their thin veils of self-pride to their darkest secret: ethnic stigma (…) ‘we are the last, the worst, the most hopeless; and we are the ones to blame for it’ (…) unable to create an endogenous model they voluntarily ‘colonize’ themselves with an exogenous model”.\(^{21}\)

This ‘self-colonization’ has added a tendency to escape individually from ethnic stigma by over-criticizing the country and its fellows, a Romanian national sport, making fun of the stigma with black humor, self-irony and relativism. This state of ambiguous in-betweenness, at the gates, on the bridge, never quite inside either West or East, never quite free from “the vices


of the East, nor acquired any of the virtues of the West" 22 is perceived as a dangerous road – its vacillation and ambivalence cannot be relied upon to authentically praise the new capitalist regime.

How has ‘balkanization” become an indication for “trouble and conflict”? The East has constantly been portrayed as such, a source of destabilizing but also reinforcing the identity of the West. The East is identified as industrially backward, lacking the advanced social relations and institutions of the developed capitalist world, irrational and superstitious, basically unenlightened: around 60,000,000 people “ignorant, poor and sick people, over whom already Europe is planning “spheres of influence.” 23 Opposed to the Western Europeans who are used to cleanness, order, self-control, strength of character, sense of law, justice, efficiency, the East is lazy and passive, opportunist and false, superstitious and inefficient, sluggish and misogynist, cruel and unstable.

As we also noticed in the case-study of Rosia Montana, the negative image of backwardness is equated with the mountain location and closeness to nature; the word “Balkan” has been linked to mountain ever since the fourteenth century given the Ottomans’ reference to this space as the range of rocky and wooded mountains in the northwest of Turkey descending into the Black Sea and covering Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary. 24 Balkanism is used in the media and in literary studies to indicate not only fragmentation and eternal strife but also dehumanization and lack of civilization, the status of not quite ready for the blessing of democracy and liberal development.

Romanian literature teaches us about the historical problematic relationship between the Romanian nation-building and the “foreign” elements of influence and impositions: in the 1860s,

24 Maria Nikolaeva Todorova, Imagining the Balkans, Updated ed.,( New York: Oxford University Press, 2009)
the movement called Junimea (The Youth) popularized anti-Western and anti-modernization ideas by arguing that imitation of the modern West means creation of a society of “forms without substance”. They lament the popular trends towards Europenization as diluting and subverting core national values, damaging the ethos, corrupting and alienating. The quote below defines the crucial dilemma of the Romanian national narrative:

Why do you spend time with Romanian history? (…) Don’t you see that we have no history? A people that does not have literature, art, a past civilization, that does not deserve historians. When France was giving Moliere and Racine, Romanians were in complete barbarism. Then Eminescu, who stood in a corner, stands up and said, with a violent tone, unusual for him: - What you call barbarism, I call the demureness and good soul of a people who develops according to its own genius, beware of foreign interference.  

The differend concerning national origins is here viewed as the starting point for becoming conscious of identity. At the same time, however, every such identity is expected to be translated into territorial terms. In this line of thinking, there is no identity without territoriality. Romanian history has been marked by a continuous attempt to defend its territory against some type of foreign invasion or intrusion. On the one hand, Romanians tried to portray Romans as their forebears in order to look civilized and equal to the West while undermining Dacic influence. During 1839 and 1860 all literature and history of Romania was over-praising its Latin roots as common Western roots that make Romanians similar to other great nations of the West. On the other hand, the logic of nationalism was asking for a “revenge of the Daci” and the years of 1940 gave another context for an appeal to ethnic purity and a discursive exclusion of Roman roots. The communists too started to interpret the Daci’s encounter with the Romans as a colonialist story while the Romans were described as the Western imperialists. But even historical accounts that were trying to present the people as a synthesis of both Romans and Daci

25 Lucian Boia, History and Myth in the Romanian Consciousness, (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2002).
were doing this as a way to heal the inferiority complex: “Let’s not be disgusted by the fact that Daci’s blood is mixed in our nationality.”

One can notice in Rosia Montana the two-sided version of the same typologies: of nationalistic pride and of self-deprecation: one coming from the local people as an aversion for the Canadian corporation “telling them how to think and live” which is overlapping self-deprecation about the persistent lack of national and local initiatives for transformation; the other one, of the corporation accusing the “foreign” leaders of the local movement, either Greenpeace or Stephanie Ruth or the Soros Foundation. Both self-deprecation and victimization and chauvinistic grand-mania (nationalistic pride) are the two faces of the same identity, leaving room for permissive or passive attitude, a neutrality towards both the Western and the Oriental world (as the country is situated at the ‘gates of the Orient’ but never really inside one or the other). It is a dire confusion as one of the most frequent phrase you here in Romania nowadays is “one does not know what to believe anymore”. According to some historians, the conclusion that can be reached following these controversies is that Romanians lack an authentic attachment to foreign and (thus to) Western values. In addition, the relationship with the past is contradictory if one notices that nation-building itself was a history of disagreements and disunities.

Thus, against the stereotypes about the Balkan virulent nationalism, Todorova reminds us that this may just be a defensive process, a result of the problems of unconsolidated nation-states. After all, nation-building, with its inherent nationalism and nation-killing complement, has been Europe’s gift to the world; why not allow for them to develop in areas too? While it is largely accepted that colonized nations use national pride as stimulus in their struggle for liberation, the

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27 Boia, *History and Myth in the Romanian Consciousness*. 
Balkan areas has rather been condemned for such emotion, another inhibition of political economy that suffuses the Balkanist discourse. This can be seen as a tool for the promotion of global developmentalist agenda to be looked at from the perspective of post-Cold War triumph of neo-liberalism (and globalization) as the ideology without competitor.

The fall of communism has been viewed as a confirmation of the supremacy of a liberal capitalist order, economic globalization being its method. This includes the ‘one-size-fits all’ approach to development: privatization, government deregulation, and fewer barriers to trade or financial flows. What we mean by ‘developmentalism’ is the discourse justifying the economic decisions of neo-liberal global integration. Their application in the practices of key social institutions was intimately related to the re-configuration of power relations in former communist states.

The term “globalization” is used here to represent the context of private capital infiltration to the post-communist nations accompanied by a host of cultural, political and economic mechanisms to facilitate its control. The blueprints indeed created important opportunities for some actors and in some areas but they also brought about different constraints and frustrations. The economic projects developed throughout Romania, for instance, did transform the landscape and the possibilities for many Romanians, especially in urban areas and among educated, younger social categories of ‘middle-class’. However, many areas remained marginalized from the economic benefits of globalization. But, while the disillusionment with market capitalism has been growing for the many vulnerable, those who controlled the

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economies during communism have been in a privileged position to perpetuate their power because:

Their interests coincided with those who controlled the global economy in the West. (...) Economically global corporations too locked to the Eastern Bloc as a region which would have little choice but to accept integration into the world economy on whatever meagre terms they set. Eastern Europe would be a market; it would be a source of raw materials.  

Moreover, neo-liberal globalization, thus, strikes us through the complex way in which the paradigm has been pushed as the ideal thought. There is “an increasing volume of information that is continually coded and recoded to meet the interests of corporate capitalism”  

while it seems that there are dominant discourses and institutions which carry rationalization processes forward, structure public meanings and social relationships. Therefore, alternative discourses find it difficult to exist. In the Balkans, Balkanism has been a tool in the attempt to erase differences that might inform alternative discourse. 

Discovery of the Balkans is another story of how people deal with difference and, as any story, does not merely present but also represents (reproduces and reinforces) a frozen collective in order to suit the power interests of the “great” nations. In a Cold-War language of homogeneity, this approach closes the entire region into a bloc of latent anti-modernist and anti-capitalist threats. According to Tismaneanu, the latent anti-liberal and communitarian dimension of the revolutions of 1989 is that they bring out a challenge not only to capitalism but to modernity as a critique of its inability to preserve a connection with the sacred.  

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room for overabundance of irrational creeds and neo-romantic visions belonging to a tradition of counter-Enlightenment that the Bolshevists could only tame but not erase.

In this space, no loyalty is solid but evanescent offering a disappointment to those Western scholars thinking that the revolutions would lead to a new politics of moral liberal nature. In other words, the fall of communism, the bloody revolution and the obsession with Americanization and Europenization are not enough because the region is essentially an ‘illiberal’ one. But as Zizek argues, Eastern European intellectuals impute to nationalist populism and communism the characteristics of Capitalism itself, that is, volatility and imbalance. The current nationalisms of the Balkans are reactions that serve the beautification of capitalism and democracy. 33 Therefore, when talking of resistance in Balkanist terms, the spectrum for the examination of resistance is limited to bolster the mainstream liberal discourse.

“unavoidable disappointment that manifested itself, in turn, as nostalgia for the “good old” Communist times; as rightist, nationalist populism; and as renewed, belated anti-Communist paranoia. (…) But the Communist nostalgia should not be taken too seriously: far from expressing an actual wish to return to the gray Socialist reality, it is more a form of mourning, of gently getting rid of the past. As for the rise of the rightist populism, it is not an Eastern European specialty, but a common feature of all countries caught in the vortex of globalization. (…) Why were the old ghosts resuscitated in nations where many young people don’t even remember the Communist times? The new anti-Communism provides a simple answer to the question: “If capitalism is really so much better than Socialism, why are our lives still miserable?” 34

Balkanist (and implicitly developmentalist) overtones have haunted the Rosia Montana movement, being used and abused to perpetuate the image of an illiberal society whose desire to protect cultural values signifies a perilous historical tradition of anti-modernism. As the corporation argues, “Our project is the only viable development for the Rosia Montana valley. By opposing our project, the NGO Alburnus Maior is preventing any opportunity, and any

34 Slavoj Zizek, “20 Years of Collapse”.

choice, for the development of the community in Rosia Montana.”35 As we shall see in another chapter, the corporation has instrumentally used the concept of Balkanism to trivialize and lock the movement into dichotomies: traditional versus modern, nationalist versus liberal, communist versus capitalist: “In Romania and Hungary, groups opposed to the Rosia Montana project play on old resentments of foreign companies and of capitalism in general”.36

For Tismaneanu, the return of the past (myths) and the tendency to demonize “foreigners” are dangerous signs of the crisis of modernity, the reaction to which is “a search for roots, a yearning for identifying bonds that, because they appeal to warm emotions and cherished memories.” This, however, should not mean ‘the liberal way or the extremist way’. Part of struggles for self-determination, people often (re)invent the argument of homeland as a place of attachment. To reject this gesture would probably make sense if the state project would actually be pluralist. Moreover, (re)production of essentialized identities and spaces can be both, the artistry of politicians in search for power and the imagination of people in defense of ‘primordia’ no matter how ambiguously invented this may be.

Rosia Montana itself is a situation of a differend type of nature pondering between resistance and acceptance to commodify things within the market logic of expansion: those who preferred the corporate project (supposedly in line with Western liberal values of development) do not form a homogenous group of corporate supporters just as the oppositional group has never been a unitary one but constantly changing. As Igor Kyotoff was arguing, this is the type of society in which “a person’s social identities are not only numerous but often conflicting”, where

37 Tismaneanu, Fantasies of Salvation, p. 95
one is likely to encounter a “drama of identities, - of their clashes, of the impossibility of choosing between them…the drama, in brief, lies in the uncertainty of identity…”39

**Aesthetic Resistance and The Subaltern**

Back in the ‘old communist times’ resistance to the regime could take so many different shapes: even refusing to wear the red tie of the uniform would attract the anger of a school-teacher, the authority in charge with ideological indoctrination. What could resistance mean nowadays when core values such as democracy or freedom are being commodified? How does one articulate resistance? Where does the power regime feel more ‘totalizing’? As contemporary Romanian writers humorously argue:

> I am curious how is it that every time I criticize, an amount of money is transferred into my account. This strikes me as extremely dangerous. In the Stalin regime, one was sent to the Gulag when criticizing so that one can feel the results biologically. (…) In capitalism, critique has only one result: change in some numbers for the accountancy.40

I was possibly more aware of the bankruptcy of ideological discourses that many of my contemporaries because I grew up under a Red totalitarianism that used all the buzzwords of community and liberty but meant exactly the opposite by them.41

Nowadays, there is no shared vision regarding the content and the way in which resistance may be practiced and it is difficult to give an unequivocal answer to the questions ‘what is resistance?’ and ‘resistance to what/whom?’ (Post)industrial society, characterized by fragmented and pluralistic forms of conflict and critique, has made hegemony less palpable, and,

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as our case-study here also shows, has often transformed it into daily situations with structural characteristics but no visible connection to a systemic or centralized form of conflict. By ‘resistance’, I hint to the forms of critical interrogations of the neo-liberal ideology that presents the market as the only possibility to wealth creation. It does not have to mean merely a nationalist, leftist, ecologist, anarchist or other ideological struggle while it may borrow from all these. It does not have to be collective nor individual while it may be both. Resistance may be seen as a discursive construction pondering between multiple ideologies and action paths.

For instance, the resistance movements commonly named ‘anti-alter globalization’ movements: this label is in itself ambivalent and thus the movements are also referred to as ‘alternative globalization’, critical globalization movements, or anti-corporate globalization. These are usually pluralized to reflect the diversity and difference among the collectives contesting the neo-liberal hegemony, and the equally diverse imaginings and practices for resistance they propose. The label ‘anti-globalization is also problematic because many of the protesters/participants in these movements specify that their critique is not directed against globalization per se but against the damaging effects of corporate and neo-liberal financial processes of globalization that work in favor of a small elite in developed countries.42

Trying to define ‘resistance’ led me to think that it may also be an attitude, a stance, a feeling, a critique and not just a program, a movement, or an organization. One could not entrust the task of social struggles and transformations only to institutional arrangements be them non-hierarchical as some social movements claim to be. As Foucault would say:

Critique does not have the premises of a thinking that conclusively explains: and this is what is to be done now. It must be an instrument for those who fight, resist, and who no longer want what is. It must be used in processes of conflict, confrontation and resistance attempts. It must not be the law of the law. It is not a stage in a program. It is a challenge to the status quo.43

42 Kingsnorth, One No, Many Yeses.
Various ways of expanding the scope of democratic participation (civic initiatives of all sorts) may be felt as pressures to another artificial harmonization of the desire for individuality and the desire for communality. This may (temporarily) satisfy the sense of justice of some while inevitably alienating others.\textsuperscript{44} Suppressing the ambiguity of democracy and the elements of disharmony implicit in it by demonizing what is constructed as ‘abnormal’ mirrors the rationalist project of Enlightenment which constructed its own social ‘ontology of concord’\textsuperscript{45} in order to give an appearance of natural predominance to fabricated precepts such as rationality, morality and self-fulfilling.

Despite invitations to resistance as practical forms of (radical) democratic struggles,\textsuperscript{46} one could spent more time to experience cognitive and emotional detachment before rushing into ideological action that could simply reproduce similar conditions. As Foucault argues, to speak of radical struggle, often ideological, equates with invoking the existence of a ‘truth’ that is opposes by means of a different truth:

The notion of ideology appears to me to be difficult to make use of, for three reasons. The first is that, like it or not, it always stands in virtual opposition to something else which is supposed to count as truth […] The second drawback is that the concept of ideology refers, I think necessarily, to something of the order of a subject. Thirdly, ideology stands in a secondary position relative to something which functions as its infrastructure, as its material, economic determinant, etc.\textsuperscript{47}

It is here that the problem of consciousness - unified by some ideology and struggling for liberation from one ‘truth regime’ (or emancipation to another truth) – has an important

\textsuperscript{45} Connolly, \textit{Politics and Ambiguity}.
\textsuperscript{47} Foucault, “Two Lectures”. In \textit{Power/Knowledge}, p. 118.
relevance for the issue of resistance. The implication that consciousness can be 'false' or 'true'
and the relation between individual agency vis-a-vis ideology are essential aspects for any
politics of resistance. Ideology has remained, in its vernacular use, a derogatory word for "a body
of ideas which are alleged to be erroneous". At the cognitive level, people are generally caught
between demands of critical thinking (which we associate here with open aesthetic thinking) and
the social institutions which pressure them to speak/think as part of a collective (ideological,
programmatic). Our emotions are also elements of ideological reproduction and our
attachments do not necessarily or automatically change once we get new different knowledge.
Ideology, thus, helps us cope with the violence of existence:

In its basic dimension [ideology] is a fantasy-construction which serves as a support for
our 'reality' itself", namely the fundamental (and psychologically traumatic) antagonism
of the inescapability of death, of inequality and of powerlessness.

The first step to overcome this duality – between the violence of existence and our ideals
for a better world - that limits the possibility of resistance is to see the aesthetic component of
ideological thinking at the mundane individual level where ideology is not merely a ‘false
consciousness’ but serves an adaptation function, no longer about deceit, misrepresentation or
illusions, but about processes of knowing and the relation between knowledge and power in a
generic, post-Marxist way.

Ideology constitutes individuals as subjects and creates the discursive positions from
within which we recognize ourselves as agents and from which we are able to speak

\[51\] It is the sense Foucault gives to post-Marxist view of power as relation that are coexistent with social relations and interwoven
"with other kinds of relations (production, kinship, family, sexuality) for which they play at once a conditioning and a
conditioned role", Foucault, “Two Lectures”, in *Power/Knowledge*, p. 142.
intelligibly\textsuperscript{52}, be recognized in various ritual practices.\textsuperscript{53} This gives the appearance of choice working by ourselves\textsuperscript{54} despite often recognizing the fragility of our commitment or faith. As the Rosia Montana case will also reveal, human consciousness may be the host of multiple ideologies interacting and competing for meaning-making and practice-development; one more to acknowledge the aesthetic ambivalence of the everyday subject. Subjectivities reproduce social orders of the present, the past and the imagined future while no homogenous knitting of these is absolute or definitive. The ‘seduction’ of various ideologies is often the object of consciousness for the individual agent while the capturing of his or her consent is an on-going struggle not only for the programmatic elites themselves but for self’s own consciousness. The ideological seduction of our consciousness is often transitory, temporary, contextual rather than absolute.

The crucial element for reflection here is not the subject or his or her consciousness but the conditions of possibility for such ideological seduction or under which speech becomes meaningful and prevailing, which are in themselves historically contingent. The economic mode of production may be an aspect of the power relations, but it is not the only one. Power is a particular hierarchy of classifications through which the social world order become constituted. Change and resistance is made possible by the very nature of the social dimension: complex, indeterminate, incomplete and open to chance.

Resistance, as opposed to revolution, is the social form of action following the understanding of power and knowledge, as well as power and resistance as mutually constitutive. Power is in itself a practice and constitutes whatever it tries to control. For Foucault resistance


does not mean a dichotomy between two forces, or a binary essence which urges for an inclusion of masses into politics, abolishment the so-called class-division characterizing the structure of capitalist domination. As Foucault argues, the world is not necessarily divided in binary forces - the included and the excluded but is a multiplicity of discourses that come into play producing power, reinforcing, undermining, exposing it. For Foucault, any major domination is hegemonic but there are always points of resistance. Power must be analyzed as something which circulates, something which only functions as a chain. It is never localized here and there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity. It flows through the veins of society, permeating all levels. Individuals circulate between its threads and always in the position of simultaneously exercising this power. Thus, resistance is implicit in all power relations and the political is a free open-ended space.

Power relations are non-equalitarian and mobile: power is not a thing but the operation of political technologies throughout the social body in everyday life. We should analyze how these unequal relations of power are nurtured through political technologies and contrasts the theoretical equality proclaimed by laws and philosophers – to do this, we need to look at *micro-practices*, the political technologies in which our daily practices are formed. Thus, one can ask: could the exploited reproduce their-own exploitation? Can we even speak of exploitation without invoking complicity? What is the meaning of ‘discipline’ if power relations are productive and not only repressive, if they produce our reality, our truths and ultimately ‘us’? What is the meaning of resistance if the power-knowledge nexus cannot really create a monopoly, a hegemony given the “obscure areas of tolerance” or constant exit-lines of resistance?

Resistance, much as critique, can be seen as “a practice that suspends judgment” beyond accusations or condemnations: these can trap the object of criticism and “the thing criticized
holds back and even consumes the one who criticizes”. Resistance, therefore, can be about opening a new space for practice. It is a form of antagonism that does not reach a deadlock of dualist confrontations but allows itself the joy of invention, imagination and creation of something new. It can involve a moment of ‘stand-by’ appropriate for making distinctions, between ‘consciousness’ and ‘false consciousness’ as well as ask the question of whether there is anything outside an (even realized) false consciousness. I am thinking about an inclusive, open and permanent form of disagreement and indignation, reflection and/about revolt. Dissent (whether individual or collective) could survive as an attitude in a permanent tension between desires for homogeneous unity and centrifugal dispersion.

Moreover, rather than considering ‘resistance’ as the reflective privilege of intellectuals, this dissertation wishes to project the idea that the ‘subaltern’ is not merely caught up in the practical/contextual/limited type of reflexivity; in the ‘distribution of the sensible’ there are artisans who ‘make time’ for other than their work and devote themselves to the public realm. The mixture of these forms of critique, often contradictory and volatile, creates an aesthetic panorama of valuable insight for the task of discursive challenges to various forms of domination. This logic of subjectification is closely connected to an understanding of equality among people as active, allowing the possibility of inequality itself. I use the term ‘subaltern’ to indicate the people in Rosia but it can broadly refer to ‘the people’, women, peasants, landless or workers or more generally vulnerable people irrespective of the political regimes they live in. It appears in contrast with elites that are politically and ideologically situated as to benefit regimes and to organize ‘the people’ hierarchically and vertically through institutions and laws. Elites

have been historically notorious for co-option, taking advantage of regimes (either communist or capitalist). The subaltern has been traditionally discredited as irrelevant and irrational, ‘meat’ for the ‘guns’ of political projects. But the ‘superiority’ of the elites is a moment of profound delusion: the very fact that the ‘masses’ understand any ‘command’ is upsetting any such labeling. As Ranciere argues,

There is order in society because some people command and others obey, but in order to obey an order at least two things are required: you must understand the order and you must understand that you must obey it. And to do that, you must already be the equal of the person who is ordering you.  

Subaltern politics can, therefore, be spontaneous, disruptive, horizontal and spreading through kinship, tradition and rumors, religion and territory. It is the story of the anonymous popular heroes that are usually neglected in mainstream history textbooks. Surely to investigate such a subaltern seems a positivist project in itself when solidarity is seen as a ‘signifier of consciousness’. However, as Spivak argues, “When we are speaking of resistance, we must assume agency and even collective agency, but then a step has already been taken”\(^\text{59}\); agency is not only the capacity to re-write and re-make history but it is also the effort to recognize and emphasize the structures that support this capacity.

I will use her term “strategic essentialism” to refer to the ways in which Rosienii temporarily and fragmentary put aside their differences in order to forge a sense of collective identity through which they developed the Save Rosia Montana campaign. In line with my argument, this strategic practice dialectically uses the heterogeneity of Rosia for the strategic goal of blocking the corporate project.

\(^{58}\) Ranciere, *Dis-agreement*, p. 16.

When a movement coalesces, when points of resistance actually coalesce into some kind of movement, then a dialectic is provisionally established. This is rather different from justifying situational changes on the monumentalized blueprint of the great discourse holders. It doesn’t just come from above.⁶⁰

In such a practical pragmatic endeavor, intellectualizing the problems of collective consciousness is postponed to leave room for the practical immediate need of identitarian collective; hence, success (or failure) is not necessarily related to the level of consciousness; these are rather theoretical fictions.⁶¹ In addition, consciousness as a collective is self-alienating because “Unless the subject separates from itself to grasp the object there is no cognition, indeed no thinking, no judgment.”⁶²

Challenging (fixed) representations, Rosia’s strategic essentialism has meant thinking differently about subjectivity. The encounter between the moral and market economy has been such that it forced locals to substitute recognition of self as a proletarian-miner into multiple imagined possibilities for reinvention of self. The rupture has created the conditions of possibility for multiple affirmations.

Resistance, much as critique, may ultimately remain individual, as our case-study also illustrates: any form of collective or institutionalized action imposes other values which may have perverse effects eventually being repressive for individuals. I think that this form of individual, non-definitive, partial, indeterminate resistance does not equal ‘failure’; it may be viewed as a ‘failure’ only from the perspective of an a priori (normative) collective gaze. As Foucault writes, the ‘techniques of the Self’ are in an ongoing struggle with the power discourses; freedom (as resisting reproduction of those discourses) is difficult, contingent and temporary. Most of all, resistance as individual attitude, is in itself feeble given the incapacity of

a ‘pure’ relationship with one’s own (individual) will. Ultimately, resistance may be seen as a constant ‘unlearning’ of our modernity, transforming our world without asking for power over others, efforts of walking different roads into the infinite forms of becoming into human existence, permanent self-rebellions and re-invention of multiple ways of life.

As we shall see in this dissertation, Rosienii are both considering and resisting multiple discursive positions in the construction of their own reality and identity, collectively and individually. Rosia Montana is, thus, investigated here as an ‘object of discourse’: how it becomes spoken of, under what conditions this is made possible. Discursive formation is "a space of multiple dissensions" and resistance is an ambiguous discursive practice through which Rosienii make sense as well as partake their sense of Rosia Montana. This is an invitation to the possibility of seeing the Rosienii as ‘aesthetic subjects’ given the fact that there is no intelligible (ideological) discourse to their feelings and that they try on various ways to re-invent themselves beyond the ‘consciousness’ of a miner or farmer. As we shall see in a future chapter, the lack of a consensus over the linguistic formula to name their ambiguous resistance and compliance is actually obvious in their repetition of ‘I don't know’.

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Rosia Montana

Rosia Montana has two main valuables: gold and (fresh) air; despite them, it is dying between the two.\footnote{Petre Suciu: *Rosia Montana: Monographic Investigation*, (Cluj: Institute of Editing and Graphic Arts, 1927), p. 4.}

In Romania, different yokes are historically invoked to shape the national narrative on the continuous alien threats to Romanian land and resources. The history of gold exploitation has also been described as such, as a history of hardship for the miners, be they ancient slaves (prisoners of wars), feudal ‘iobagi’ (servants) or later on, workers and private entrepreneurs. Gold, the main reason for Roman’s domination and mining for it has continued with ups and downs throughout centuries irrespective of the ruling power. According to some historians, the most productive times were between 1850 and 1880 because of over 200 corporations and private owners that took the most out of the land. The Hungarian rulers at that time invested in infrastructure and in specialists for the mining economy. World War I brought a diminishing in the activity and the ruin of few mining sites. After 1922 the price of gold became fixed and under the global market price and the wealth of this region started to decrease.\footnote{Suciu: *Rosia Montana: Monographic Investigation*.}

The travels other made to Rosia were inspired by the “thought of a quiet retreat”\footnote{Suciu: *Rosia Montana: Monographic Investigation*, p. 3.}; indeed the beauty of the nature is a strong attraction for a tourist. Ever since 1927 Suciu writes that “Rosia has two main valuables: gold and (fresh) air; despite them, it is dying between the two”\footnote{Ibid, p. 4.}; ever since that time, the region seemed marked by famine and disease, while the ‘bodies of people are drained by hard labor (...) and bad pay” Mining has been the main activity of these people which has both made them rich and/or estranged them.

After centuries of exploitation, gold is still to be prospected in the bowels of Transylvanian earth. To no one’s surprise it became appealing to foreign investment after the communist collapse. Although one might assume that its rich resource would give it a commanding position, the village’s public image has been constructed as a ‘problem’ to be solved through modern ‘developmental’ interventions. Thus, the global relevance of this Transylvanian village called ‘Rosia Montana’ became public.

In the 1990s, the Rosia Montana area was officially declared disadvantaged and mono-industrial. It became one of the many places in Romania where the lack of modern “progress” and the communist damage had compelled foreign investments in mining. Rosia was being perceived as a ‘periphery’ in a twofold meaning. First, it was a periphery in the global context of political economy given the isolation of Romania itself. Second, it was a periphery in the national context of political economy where more and more spaces formerly dynamic in the communist industrial complex were doomed to disappear or to be changed according to the new rules of the market. Thus, in 1997, the Romanian government granted the right of exploration and exploitation to Euro-Gold Resources (later on called Rosia Montana Gold Corporation (RMGC) while the terms of this contract were classified as secret information. Declaring the area ‘mono-industrial’ and allowing RMGC’s land exploration closed the village in a deadlock: from the onset, other alternative possibilities of development were foreclosed.

In September 2000 over 300 subsistence farming families from Rosia Montana and 100 families from neighboring area of Bucium decided to form the Alburnus Maior organization to oppose the RMGC on social, environmental, cultural and economic grounds. For them, the project would mean relocation of 910 households, displacement of about 2,000 persons from 740 houses and 138 flats, destruction of four mountains, a lake of cyanide and toxic waste covering
over 1800 hectares of land, demolished houses and buildings (many of them being of cultural patrimony such as the famous Roman Galleries) and last but not least unburying the ancestors of the local people through the destruction of 9 cemeteries and 8 churches. The destruction of the Piatra Corbului and Piatra Despicata natural monuments is planned as well as the creation of a decantation pond for the processed sterile deposits (on the territory of the present-day village of Corna) with a 185 meters high dam.

Despite the initial strong opposition, between 2002 and 2010, around 80 per cent of the habitants have sold their properties to the Gold Corporation. However, the RMGC still did not manage to obtain the exploitation license. For more than ten years Alburnus Maior supported by a coalition of national and international NGOs insisted in asking for alternatives. In September 2007 a crucial victory of this movement has been announced: the licensing procedure for the RMGC project was cancelled. In January 2008, Alba Iulia’s Court of Appeal declares the Rosia Montana’s Urban Plans, illegal. The 2009 economic crisis produced increased pressures for the project implementation while various forces have been pushing and pulling in different directions - corporate financial speculations, EU’s obscurity, macro-political instability and governmental hesitations, NGOs protests and local migration.

The corporation in Rosia is currently still trying to discredit the forces resisting its mining project by criticizing ‘nostalgic’ communism or ‘foreign (green) intruders’, hinting at the state’s vulnerabilities and the ‘backward’ situation of the region. Rosienii confess about the State as silent and undecided and about the corporation’s arrogance to treat them as ‘backward’. Much of this local popular (peasant) resistance has been motivated by arguments related to religion, kinship, land, ethnicity, tradition: a case of ‘subaltern’ resistance. In addition, a lot of the formal (NGO) resistance movement has framed its motivations in terms of environmental damage and
illegal practices. After the initial start when most Rosienii were active, the movement’s actions of resistance have been gradually ‘externalized’ to more professional activists who have they themselves mobilized (local) people in their actions. This has had both benefits and drawbacks. The major problem was that it offered the corporation a reason to discredit the authenticity of the local movement (invoking the lack of representativeness of the NGOs).

There are only a few academic accounts examining the conflict in Rosia Montana from a global (political and sociological) perspective. For example, Christoph Waack writes in 2003 about the risks and changes in the mining industry of the Apuseni Mountains (Transylvania) and about Rosia Montana as the most productive deposit of gold. He believes that “It is difficult to evaluate the risks and opportunities of the project presented in this dissertation, but if sustainable development is to mean more than just a rhetoric phrase, than the gold-mining project in Rosia Montana cannot be licensed by the Romanian government”.

Furthermore he argues that the risks of the mining project are covered by what appears are a beneficial exchange: technological and know-how transfer as well as employment. However, dependency on one major investor damages democratic decision making. Viewed from the perspective of developmental opportunities, the monopoly of mining could only be removed with the cost of isolation into periphery. Waack seems to be simply dividing the Rosienii into two categories: those who wish to sell their land because they favor mining and whose who do not wish to sell because they are older and disconnected from mining.

An interesting point Waack makes is analyzing the concept of “Tara Motilor’ (The Country of the Moti) that is the space inhabited by people of the Apuseni Mountains where there is a long tradition in using this concept to indicate the mentality of people who defend their

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freedom (as we shall discuss in a future chapter, this freedom is strongly connected with the sacredness and spirituality of the mountain and nature. Waack argues that this reproducing of a stereotype is actually used for the interests of the actors of both sides.\textsuperscript{70}

Caring out an extensive sociological research, Mihai Pascaru published a study called *The Habitat Dispersed and Globalization*, where the numerous testimonies from Rosienii of Rosia, Bunta and Corna (neighboring villages) have been divided in ‘pros’ and ‘cons’ with no reference whatsoever to the ambiguities of choices and no further analysis.\textsuperscript{71} We can, however, observe the high number of ‘undecided’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: Residential choices of 77 inhabitants from Corna and Bunta</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Choices</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village in the area\textsuperscript{15}</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town in the area</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village outside the area, in Alba county</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town in Alba county</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village in another county</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town in another county</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another country</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refused to leave</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>77</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Pascaru 2007: 97

Szombati is another scholar who wrote an article and a MA thesis on Rosia Montana. He first approaches the issue of the overwhelming support for the economic benefits of the project at the expense of environmental issues and motivates this fact by referring to the deprivation,

\textsuperscript{70} Ch. Waack, Țara Moților – a Regional Term between Economic and Ecological Interests. Some Explorations in the Romanian Periphery, *Romanian Review of Regional Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2005

\textsuperscript{71} Mihai Pascaru, *The Habitat Dispersed and Globalization* (Habitatul risipit și globalizarea), (Cluj: Argonaut, 2007).
unemployment and powerlessness of the Rosienii. Later on, he furthers his analysis with deeper insights that are especially valuable for this dissertation: he talks about the hegemonic power of the corporation and the capacity to place local lives into stand-by, a sort of numbness that does not simply mirror loyalty to the investor but also awareness of the injustice it produce.

Analyzing the ‘mobilization of affect’ as a strategy of the regime of power in manufacturing the consent of the masses, Szomati argues that there is an intimate emotional bond between what to us appears as the ‘oppressor’ and the ‘oppressed’: “What if, instead of taking ‘feelings of powerlessness’ as natural (i.e. the outcome of a ‘rational’ assessment of objective limits to agency), one scrutinized the conditions of political support? By proceeding thusly, we may even find that what to the distant observer appears as ‘powerlessness’, may in fact be the expression of something utterly different…”

Szombati has not yet nuanced this analysis and limited it to the conclusion that the opposed ideals – of loyalty production regarding the land and the community (as portrayed, according to him, by older actors influenced by socialist ideals of equality and unity) versus hope and desire production for the novelty of new capital economy (as exemplified for instance by women or younger people interested in working for the corporation, being promoted and making money to afford consumer goods) – mirror a shift in post-socialist ‘culture’. Pinpointing to this ‘shift’ and calling for a treatment of Rosia as “a site for debating moral questions concerning the spread of the market and foreign capital, the role of the state and the ongoing differentiation of social interests” makes his work a good starting point that will be further developed in this

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73 Szombati, Kristóf, The spell of Gold: Affective politics and the will to hegemony in a Transylvanian mining community.” Master’s thesis submitted to Darwin College.
74 Szombati, The spell of Gold
dissertation in order to make a more nuanced account on the ambiguity of resistance to capital economy.

Aggregating a national debate, the *differend* of Rosia Montana mirrors the tensions and problems of Romania itself as well as for the post-communist space more generally. As Szombati argues “The success or failure of this strategy (*i.e.* the personalization of political relationships between the Hegemon and the Rosienii) is bound to shape the future of not only Rosia Montana’s inhabitants and the mining industry and the national economy as a whole”\(^7\) but of the political subject: “GOLD’s hegemonic power articulates through fantasies of ‘becoming someone’ or ‘arriving somewhere’ in a system which has until now completely failed to live up to the expectations (of prosperity and justice) that had provided the grounds of its legitimation”.

In this dissertation I hope to add more not only to the academic literature on Rosia Montana and on post-communism but also to the more extensive research on capitalism and resistance. The following section will draw the theoretical framework that inspires the above arguments. The post-communist arena infused with developmentalist discourses, augmented by Balkanist overtones is an interesting space for analyzing resistance as an aesthetic stance.

\(^{7}\) Szombati, The spell of Gold
On Methods

*In the social world there is always more than one story to tell.*”76

What methodological guidance do we have left once interpretive coherence has lost its legitimation and the signified itself has dissolved in the abyss of mere signifiers. (...) Is it possible to interpret without any kind of coherence??77

In Rosia the conflict simmered and the situation was highly polarized in 2007 when I first visited. Many of the Rosienii left after seven years of what they describe as nerve-racking struggle. Suspicion abounded. People were living in tension-ridden environments that regularly broke into verbal and even physical conflicts. I was always questioned about my intentions and position on the conflict, being asked to confirm that I do not work for RMGC or, later on, even for Soros.78 There was a strong sense of dualism and the “they vs. us” rhetoric prevailed despite the fact that actors were not necessarily static in their stance; yesterday’s “friend” could easily become a “foe” tomorrow. Many times my attempt to start a conversation with some local persons was “welcomed” with the question: Who are you? Are you with RMCG? If by any chance I was wearing the T-shirt with the “Save Rosia Montana” inscription, I could be more easily welcomed in the house of a person.

Despite my recognized sympathy for the opponents to the project, some of the leaders insisted in remaining anonymous. Some of them did not like to speak much as the feeling was “they already said enough and nothing changed”. However, others offered me poems and gifts that have symbolic meanings for them. I visited Rosia Montana four times during the summer of 2007 and 2008 and I took fifteen semi-structured interviews while having informal discussions.


78 Some of the members of the local and national movement were also suspicious on the Soros’s implication in this anti-corporate project. I will detail on this in another chapter.
with around ten more Rosienii. I also informally talked with six Rosienii who sold their land. This is a relatively significant number given the fact that when I arrived there in 2007, only around 100 families remained in Rosia (out of more than 800 present in 2000 before the corporate project started to be promoted).

The selection of interviewees were random and through snowball sampling technique. Interviews were taken at the person’s household or in the piazza of the village. They usually lasted from thirty minutes some to two hours depending on the individual case. I used a semi-structured interview protocol that was marginally adjusted according to circumstances (see the Annex no. 2). The main purpose of these interviews was to find out, directly from the opponents of the corporate project, about the reasons and subjective motivations for selling (or not selling) their land/properties to the corporation. I looked for those repetitive themes that the local people use to make sense of their position.

There is always a narrative in the mind of the observer even before the data gathering process. Or as Barthes argues, there is no naïve primary understanding of field data that one can conceptualize only afterword. One cannot make an accurate distinction between “our story” and “their story” while the interactive transformations may be inevitable. Language use is not just accidental utterance but suggests a social pattern of interaction and a pre-established set of possibilities. My own insertion in Rosia emerges from my commitment to a larger struggle for social justice for marginalized peoples in the developing world and particularly in post-socialist Romania. In 2007 I have contacted the Soros Foundation after I found out about their interest in defending human and civil rights in Rosia Montana. I became a volunteer for their project and

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travelled three times for few days in Rosia, to observe the work they do there and to support the program manager, Andreea Chifan, with various logistic and academic advices while participating in few local debates organized by Soros.

In addition to the informal talks and interviews I had and my participation as a ‘tourist’ at the Green Hay-Fest in August 2007, I was also able to directly approach few of the local leaders given my work as a volunteer-activist, affiliated with the Soros Foundation and the TERRA Mileniul III Foundation. Thus, I was able to make my solidarity explicit. At the end of 2007, I started to work in Romania as an activist on issues such as environmental awareness-raising. I was a project coordinator for the TERRA Foundation which for the last 12 years has been focusing on promoting sustainable development and awareness on climate change in Romania through projects on education for the environment. TERRA was the first NGO which supported the local community in Rosia with a grant for setting up an office for their resistance and it has been active in campaigning every time Alburnus Maior organized various actions.

My activity helped me document an additional perspective on the Rosia controversy coming from declared militant and environmental experts; this position is articulated by individuals whose profession is practically that of an ecologist or activist, trained and experienced in this field both at home and abroad, with a self-expressed public and active image of an activist. Thus, given the complex state-corporate partnership that marked the Rosia controversy, the (national and international) experience and knowledge of these NGO leaders comes as particularly important. Their discourse is informed by both national events and interactions but also transnational ones, being exposed to the larger global justice movement through their connections and participation to campaigns, conferences, seminars and other events.
Considering that it is close to impossible to separate speech data from the history under which it was obtained, this research stresses the necessity of knowledge that originates in participation, ordinary communication and observation. I opted for this mix of qualitative methods because they can provide rich in-depth information to more rigorously answer my research questions about the nature/discourse of the movement and its implications for power and resistance. Moreover, this methodology matches an understanding of societal construction as a struggle over meanings: meanings carry ideological and structural weight of paradigms and patterns which frame the space of our freedoms. As Clifford Geertz argued, a researcher may not get to the bottom of things but he or she can be aware of the layers of meanings that spin our life and thus refine the academic debates.\textsuperscript{81}

Part of the objectives of this dissertation is to answer this question: What are the meanings of (micro/macro) resistance to a corporate project and how do they reflect macro-structural transformations of post-socialist society? The larger purpose is, however, to draw the landscapes of discourses and meaning-making and re(making) which have marked the situation in Rosia as mirrors to the process wherein the post-communist individual has become a subject of (economic and political) disciplinary practice.\textsuperscript{82}

As any qualitative study, the meanings I associate to the stories might not necessarily be the meanings others read in this case, particularly given the conflictual situation. One can, however, reasonably recognize similar patterns especially in the formalized NGO movement and the corporate discourse I analyze here. This study has not sought to quantify the different types of responses, but has selected and analyzed the evidence considered consistent with the patterns


apparent in the data set as a whole. Therefore, and given the caveats, I use the evidence as suggestive rather than definitive while not avoiding certain conclusions. Writing about a movement, as a process and not a subject that stands still, involves a closer insider understanding of such a process.

As a qualitative research, this dissertation is looking at constructing and deconstructing processes, sensitive to the subjectivity of the person interviewed without looking for numerical measurements or generalization of results. My epistemological and ontological biases are constructive and interpretative: the world is also in the mind of the observers, and thus socially constructed. This is especially the case if one observes that globalization and social movements represent phenomena which, cannot be easily measured and require methodological and theoretical flexibility if not innovation. Moreover, the complexity and ambiguity of social phenomena in the post-communist context of continuous transformation makes my research a challenging enterprise.

The type of research I carried out fits the profile of what is called activist research: it carries various specific names such as action (participator) research, collaborative research, grounded theory, engaged research and has traditionally been the rather un-recommended form of inquiry given the predominance of positivist approaches. As Craig Calhoun argues, one of the main reasons for this “bad reputation” of the activist scholars was that modern science was usually associated with an ideal of knowledge based on detached, objective observation where expression of individual interests, emotions, or ethical commitments on social issues can supposedly distort any intellectual inquiry. This approach of an activist scholar can supposedly jeopardize the complexity of issues and compromise methodological rigor.

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However, this positivist stance has very much been under attack within the context of the decolonization struggles throughout the world in the 1970s: “(...) this counter-analysis is fueled by the now familiar deconstructive moves: against positivism as an apology for Western imperial reason; against objectivity as a smoke screen for alignment with the powerful; against methodological rigor as a fetishization of data in the absence of critical scrutiny of underlying social categories and precepts.”

Representations of “others” following a colonial logics and rationalities have raised awareness of the fact that any intellectual endeavor is very much a product of our own social positioning and our own “situatedness” in relation to people and cultures. These are conclusions of theorists like Donna Haraway, J. F. Lyotard, G. Marcus and M. Fischer, G.C. Spivak or Edward Said. The new shift in political inquiry was meant to attempt to decolonize the relationship between researcher and the informants through the research process itself as, for instance, Tuhiwai Smith argues.

This way to engage in research would acknowledge from the start the researcher’s “situated knowledge”, an experience-based understanding that can be insightful without glossing over complexities and contradictions, confronting these from the outset, as well as acknowledging to the informants about commitments to some shared political and social justice goals. The activist research methods have a built-in test of validity because it has to be comprehensible to the exact informants that constituted the subject of the research and because they have been developed and adjusted with the collaboration of the informants. The insider knowledge is also validated by the exact status of the researcher as an accepted insider to the

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84 Charles R. Hale (ed.), *Engaging Contradictions*, p. 8
movement over a rather long period of time, a movement and informants that gave their consent and even encouraged the researcher to write in support of their cause.

Moreover, this dissertation uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to point out the nature of relations of power and dominance, maintained through discourse. The purpose of this analysis is to reveal the implicit values, assumptions, the seemingly neutral and objective texts, and relate it to structures of dominance and power. CDA is a useful tool for capturing ideological, unintended, but nevertheless culturally, politically, and economically dependent aspects of texts.

CDA is a method of interpretation and analysis meant to uncover implicit and ‘take-for-granted’ values, assumptions, supposedly self-evident, neutral or objective facts, with the aim of unveiling power relations: the means by which power is enacted and the management of social representations of actors and their minds. Its validity and reliability come from the logic of argumentation and the quotes, the latter being illustratively for a larger empirical body of material. Thus, the dissertation will analyze the components of what appears to be “legitimate” versus “illegitimate” discourse as well as how some phrases are presented as self-evident rational truths and others are dismissed as inappropriate or “emotional”. The point of this analysis is to give a voice to the marginalized and to question the superiority of “legitimate” claims which subjugate alternatives.86

Basically, there are routine, everyday forms of text and talk that appear natural and quite acceptable such as the press releases we are going to analyze here, but which reproduce power relations. One major contribution of CDA would be to show the way consent and legitimacy can

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be manufactured. A useful schema of analysis created by Van Dijk has been applied: the following five analytical tools (questions) have been systematically applied in order to pin point to the interconnection between power and knowledge production:

1. Thematic statements: Which themes and topics—e.g. statements, discussions, questions, arguments—are given prominence as a whole? Special attention is paid to “headlines” type of repetitive themes.

2. Meaning and significance: Which words are chosen in preference to others? How are they used to make certain things significant or not and in what ways? What situated meaning or meanings for a given word of phrase is it reasonable to attribute to their “author” (significance/meanings).

3. Social practices (activities/relationships and identity): What activities/relationships and identities is this text being used to enact? We use language to get recognized as engaging in a certain sort of activity, to signal what sort of relationship we have, want to have, or are trying to have with other people, groups or institutions about whom we are communicating and to get recognized as taking on a certain identity or role. As in the case of the ‘two’ camps formed in Rosia, their identity is articulated by making a clear relationship division between “us” (those who support the corporation) and “they” (the opponents who are ‘nostalgic fools’ or ‘ecologists’).

4. The politics of social goods (discursive practices): What perspective on social goods is this piece of language communicating (i.e., what is being communicated as to what is taken to be “normal”, “right/moral”, “good”, “correct”, “appropriate”, “valuable”, “the way things ought to be”)? What information is implicit, implied, taken-for-granted or dependent on a certain worldview? We use language to convey a perspective on the nature of the distribution of social goods, the rules, norms, and mental models of socially acceptable behaviour in specific roles or relationships used to produce, receive, and interpret the message. Discursive practices involve ways of being in the world that signify specific and recognizable social identities: people have learned to “be” economists, members of an ethnic group, entrepreneurs or volunteers.

5. Rhetoric: By what means does the text/discourse try to convince the reader/listener of its credibility? What discourse models or inter-textuality (cultural atterns/connections/meta-narratives) is the text/language appealing to? Rhetoric can appeal to statistics, sources with a strong ethos, appeals to emotions etc. One of the most frequent arguments in the discursive war at Rosia is the idea of emotional involvement: supporters of the corporate project blame the so-called “emotional” luggage of project opponents.

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88 Ibid 2.
Outline of the Dissertation

The first part of the dissertation (including three chapters) will construct the argument that Rosia Montana may be viewed as a ‘differend’: following Lyotard’s understanding of a differend, we refer to the various narratives (representing genres of discourse) that are projecting specific representations about Rosia to make it intelligible and to propose various paths of action, or as Foucault would say, “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak.” 89 The purpose is to point out that there is no one single ‘natural’ way to ‘name’ and ‘represent’ a ‘true’ Rosia Montana and hence its allegiances and resistance: the idea of a ‘differend’ questions the fundament of such ‘truth’. These narratives are important in order to understand the discursive landscapes of meaning and the regimes of truth within which people make sense of their own reality.

This journey into the various narratives (corporate, militant or cultural) is valuable for more than one reason. First, it offers a picture of the techniques of power for the promotion of neo-liberal globalization and critically analyzes them: from the corporate perspective of the ‘truth’ and its invitation to ‘learn the True Story’, Rosia Montana Gold Corporation is ‘troubled’ ‘poor’ and ‘backward’ in need of modern upgrading, left outside the market benefits because of the influence of communists, nationalists or ecologists: the corporation has, thus, greatly capitalized from using both positively and negatively the memory of communism and the historical obsession of the Romanian culture with the Stranger (Strainul), emphasizing what I called earlier ‘inhibitions’ of political economy: the widespread feeling of embarrassment of being associated with these ideologies.

89 Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge, p. 49
Second, in its attempt to ‘Save Rosia Montana’ the counter-narrative of resistance transforms the ‘job’ of resistance into a professionalized one, carried out by an entire cohort of NGOs and activists who are also attempting to ‘speak for the Rosienii’ and ‘save’ them from their enemies. What this “salvation” means may, however, be a different story for each of the affected parties. The inner tensions and contradictions of this formalized opposition are relevant for analyzing the ambiguity of resistance. What keeps them together in the common campaigns against the corporation is no more important than what drives them apart. It is not the purpose of this dissertation to analyze the extent to which and how this resistance/opposition to the corporate project can or cannot be viewed as a ‘movement’ or to examine the nature of this movement. Moreover, talking about the case as about a ‘movement’ would mean presupposing something yet to be imagined and examined: the so-called ‘resistance’ or ‘critique’ that a movement is usually attempting to unify and essentialize. Despite accounts of new social movements that are experimenting with non-unitary and non-hierarchical or informal networking, I am yet not convinced that such fragmented movements can operate without reference to a more or less fixed and antagonistic projection of a ‘common enemy’ which, is in itself questionable.

However, given the relevance of activists’ outlook on resistance and the internal tensions of these coalitions against the corporation, the dissertation will include a chapter on the more ‘formal’ resistance as a sort of ‘strategic essentialism’ of which I detailed in the Introduction. The chapter will describe and analyze the way Rosienii have initially organized themselves into an NGO that gradually received the support of various national, regional and international organizations as well as public personalities and citizens/tourists. The purpose is to put a light on
one of the few narratives constructing the representation of Rosia as a space/place in the new capital economy of post-communism.

Third, a counter-narrative of resistance that is slightly separate from the campaign is projecting the ‘sacredness’ of Rosia Montana emphasizing the religious and spiritual connection of the Rosienii with the land, homes, mountains and surrounding nature. Its articulation, echoing themes of patriotism, Christian faith as well as ecology, offers valuable insights into the discursive economies drawing the landscape of resistance in post-communism. The ‘desire’ for ontological and epistemic transcendental certitudes or securities such as God, Spirits, Souls, Nation, Home, Nature (Mountains) motivates the idea that there are certain things which are not ‘for sale’, their divine nature being above human power of understanding. The ‘sacredness’ narrative stands in contrast with the corporate discourse of control and exploitation; the latter is legitimizing cognitive categories of knowing at the expense of other ways of relating to reality that the former habituates; the former involves less rational control and more instinctual/emotional attachment to nature and landscapes. Rosienii defend their status as agents of cultural and historical value being proud of their possessions, their land, crops and animals. Locals historicize their relation to their reality and place their subjection to the nation and the sacred into the context of major events of domination such as the Roman, the Austro-Hungarian and the communist, the violence of which is, for them, lesser than the violence of the corporation, since it allows for their land to be preserved.

The already ambiguous landscape in the representation of Rosia will be further blurred in the second part of this dissertation: a more extensive analysis of the ‘aesthetics of resistance’ reveals Rosienii’ ambiguous perspectives over the controversy, their feelings and their opinions, their grievances. The personal stories illustrated here will support the argument that there is no
unambiguous allegiance and no unambiguous resistance. Surely the propaganda of the corporation has found the right ‘seeds’ to grow into co-option into the fantasy of capitalist liberation and prosperity. This may be the new ‘enslavement’ I first heard about when travelling to Rosia: the dependence of the majority on the ‘wage’ in the context of resource alienation. But the chapter shows that (re)production of essentialized identities is both the artistry of elites in search for power but also the imagination of people in defense of ‘primordial’ no matter how ambiguously “invented” this may be. The myth of factual objectivity meets the ‘cannot find the words’ of emotional attachments which are unstable, making any judgment about facts equally unstable despite corporate claims. To say that ‘identity’ and subjectivity are settled or clear-cut absolute feelings would be overrated. The mine project does not only create marginalization and exclusion from the benefits of new spaces of globalization; it also creates new desires and often desperate claims for inclusion, recognition and assimilation into the new spaces while also (often) despising them. This last chapter will examine this ambiguity of resistance in the light of the (post)-communist experience and will be followed by a final chapter that further analysis the post-communist space as a space of aesthetic (subaltern) resistance.
CHAPTER II

“LEARN THE TRUE STORY”: DESCRIBED OR CONTRIVED?

We have to produce the truth in the same way, really, that we have to produce wealth and we have to produce the truth in order to be able to produce wealth.90

For Heidegger, to understand one thing merely as a thing involves a self-forgetting, a failure to recover how things are for us.91

‘Let us be miners!’ A Narrative of Truth

Monopolizing the means of production in the area - by exercising exclusive rights over economic activities in Rosia Montana – the Gold Corporation also attempts to gain monopoly over the (legitimate) discourse controlling what can be said about Rosia and by whom. This chapter will reveal the techniques employed by the corporation in order to gain this monopoly and the actors and identities (re)produced for its project. It will make a critical discourse analysis of communication materials issued by the Rosia Montana Gold Corporation (RMGC) between 2000 and 2010 and available on its official website, www.rmgc.ro. It is a qualitative text analysis of frames – present or absent keywords, stereotyped images, themes that suggest facts and judgments – that RMGC uses in (re)presenting the situation in Rosia and in justifying the need for their mining project to be implemented.

90 Michel Foucault, Society Must be Defended.
As the sub-chapters will detail, one can observe four main discursive themes constructed by RMGC in order to make their representation of Rosia Montana: the image of a troubled poor village (an already damaged land with an easily manipulated population and without a future for development), the image of a ‘hub’ of nostalgic communists, a space of manipulated by Western ecologists, and a test for Romanian sovereignty. By contrast with these ‘problems’ and ‘threats’, the corporation is supposedly providing not only the region but the entire Romanian nation with a unique flourishing opportunity: high technology-open cast modern mining, which Rosia Montana ‘cannot not want’.

The purpose of this chapter is to understand the process by which one kind of discourse – the commercial/corporate one – prevails on others and to portray the one party in the differend of Rosia Montana. Surely the strong local opposition supported by numerous national and international NGOs has created great leverage to make the necessary ‘noise’ as to cover some of the RMGC’s popular voice. However, by contrast to the corporation, the informal network of NGOs has never had the necessary funds as to publicize its efforts and demands for instance through TV spots or other such PR tolls with strong impact; indeed, the NGO ‘cohort’ is empowered by the increasing number of volunteers/activists or tourists interested in the issue (as we shall see more in another chapter). More than resource availability, the corporate discourse nevertheless has benefited from an already established welcoming climate of pro-developmentalism where the need for jobs and general Western consume actually perpetuates communist legacies at the level of ontological desires for security through wage-earning.

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92 Guha Ranajit, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (eds), *Selected Subaltern Studies*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988).
In this context, critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a useful method of analysis and interpretation meant to uncover implicit and ‘take-for-granted’ values, assumptions, supposedly self-evident, neutral or objective facts, with the aim of unveiling power relations: the means by which power is enacted and the management of social representations of actors and their minds.\textsuperscript{93} Through the discursive construction of Rosia and the opponents as a ‘problem’, the corporation has been influencing public knowledge, beliefs, understandings, attitudes, and values both locally and nationally.

My approach to discourse (text) here is influenced by Foucault’s idea that there are discursive limits to what can be said in a given time/society. These discourses are contingent as they arise out of random interactions of micro-practices. Every text is conditioned and inscribes itself within a given discourse. As Foucault argues, we have experiences within particular discourses, which are systems of representations (our social constructions of the world). Discourse is language in use, on site, enacting actions and identities but also non-language symbolic stuff: a way with words, deeds and interactions, thoughts and feelings, objects and tools, times and places that allows us to enact and recognize different socially situated identities; thus, discourse is also a mechanism of power that makes some claims legitimate and excludes others.

To engage in discourse analysis is to be aware of the role of language in constituting politics, understanding language and knowledge as an aspect of power. In the case of Rosia for instance, the micro-discourses on development (displayed by corporate or political actors) shape and are shaped by the macro –discourses of neo-liberal developmentalism and Balkanism (as theorized in the previous chapter) as well as by the macro-discourses of resistance exposed by

the ‘Save Rosia Montana’ social/environmental movement. Power and knowledge come together visible in discourses. We will notice that the corporate language disseminates messages about the ‘facts’ as being a property, a clear-cut observation of external reality to which it has access. In claiming ownership over the ‘true story’, RMGC is trapped in the old epistemological dilemma: subscribing to the ‘scientific discourse’ about the ‘real things’ as separate from individual’s structures of apprehension and imagination.94

In its efforts to construct Rosia Montana as a damaged space, a “hub” of former communists, a community manipulated by the Western Greens, and a “test” for sovereignty, the efforts of RMGC nurtured a movement of “anti-anti-opposition”, using values promoted by the opposition movement itself: autonomy, free choice, cultural and patrimony preservation, protection of nature and prosperity of the community. The corporation has created associations of persons interested in promoting the project as a beneficial investment for Romania; it has joined its efforts together with other civil society organizations such as miners’ trade unions and has actually created new local NGOs also. The RMGC website contains messages “from the people of Rosia Montana” who are the ‘actual’ representatives and who “can speak for themselves” while the opposition is invited only to ‘listen’. These recent NGOs initiated by corporate supporters do not have a certain organization structure (no website or location to find out more about them) and are formed by Rosienii who have sold their properties to the RMGC or Rosienii from surrounding areas of Rosia.

Despite the claim to represent ‘the citizens of Rosia”, the number of people signing corporate statements is usually higher than the actual number of inhabitants of Rosia. The intensive PR activity they have carried out to support the corporation makes us believe they are

94 Shapiro, The Politics of Representation.
actually sponsored by the RMGC (something confirmed by various members talking to the press). Thus, their representativeness for Rosia is in itself questioned as ‘civil society’ in this form is especially ‘manufactured’ for such an obvious economic interest. In my travels I heard rumors about either forced mobilization under the blackmail of losing some jobs that people may still have at the corporation or mobilization for money.

RMGC has, thus, used its power (financially superior to the non-governmental organizations involved in the opposition) not only to define and redefine the issues of the controversy, but also to define the entire situation: by generalizing beyond environmentalism, nationalism or nostalgic communism, the “real” story is about Romania’s autonomy and prosperity. Those who combat the corporation are accused of being intolerant about other stories and discriminate against those who want to tell the “truth” about the real identity of the Rosienii as miners.

Most of all, those who oppose the corporation are questioned as “foreign others”, as non-representatives of Rosienii who are promoting ‘dark or hidden’ interests. As the analysis shows, the corporate language describes the situation in Rosia as fraught with conflict: this lack of consensus is used as an essential ingredient in the construction of the “we” (internationally validated mining corporation) versus “them” (the nostalgic communists, nationalists, or ecologists). This creates the description of the corporation’s supporters as the “good guys” whose intentions are good against the various conspiracy forces of a “dark” origin. The following sub-chapter will detail on these practices.
Shaming a Damaged Space

As explained in the previous chapter, the Rosia Montana Gold Corporation - RMGC became the principal owner of the mineral rights in Rosia in 2000. This ownership is exercised through its Romanian subsidiary, the RMGC proposes to conduct new mining operation on a larger scale and replace the inefficient and underfunded workings of the state-subsidized Minvest S.A. Between 1999 and 2002 the Gabriel Resources Corporation that created the RMGC in Romania had issued hundred of press releases which refer to the technical problems and achievements related to the mining project.

First mentioning of the intention to explore the gold is on February 11, 1999 to be read on the ‘Gabriel Resources’ website: “Gabriel Resources Ltd. ("Gabriel") is pleased to announce that it has today agreed to make a non-brokered private placement to Albion Holdings Limited ("Albion") of up to 6,000,000 special warrants of Gabriel. (…) The private placement will be made pursuant to prospectus exemptions at a price of $0.75 per Special Warrant.”

This is the language and the type of messages that characterize the corporate text from 1999 to 2002. There is no reference to pollution of the area and few mentioning of the need for environmental studies. Moreover, these texts make no reference to the local inhabitants or to their perspective and mainly refer to the costs and the financial/administrative issues such as how much the price of shares has gone up. The only mentioning of the Rosienii is when related to the Resettlement Action Plan, conforming to the existent World Bank directives on involuntary

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95 Gabriel Resources is the Canadian-based resource company preparing to develop its 80.46%-owned Rosia Montana gold project (the "Project"). Minvest S.A. ("Minvest"), a Romanian state owned mining company, and one other private Romanian company, hold a 19.54% interest in Rosia Montana Gold Corporation ("RMGC"), and Gabriel holds the pre-emptive right to acquire the 19.54% minority interest.

resettlement. Headlines mainly used to announce public support for the project as a success and a confirmation for the project’s value given the hundreds of people who would negotiate their relocation. It seems to be no doubt for the corporation that the community would accept relocation given the offer.

It is important to notice the language used by the corporation to engage with obstacles and problems related to the removal of buildings. In April 2001, GR announced its shareholders that the local council of Rosia Montana has approved a land use plan which “ha[s] rezoned, for industrial purposes, all land within the Rosia Montana borough that will be required for the development […] of a large scale open pit mining operation”. Soon after that, it announced that it will proceed with the “archaeological sterilization”: that is, “buildings and dwellings will be catalogued, described and photographed, some relocated, while sites of archaeological interest be excavated, catalogued, described and any articles found which are of interest, be removed”. In other words, the purpose was to “render (land) unfruitful” for any possible future uses. Soon after, in October 2001, GR started to use the less harsh term: archaeological discharge, that is the management of historic artifacts in the development of the Roșia Montana project.

Moreover, the corporation explains (to its stakeholders) that the project economics benefits from the disadvantaged zone status of the region and from the provisions of the Romanian Mining Law: that is, the project is being exempt from income taxes until October 2009 and from customs duties for the life of the project. However, rather than presenting this as

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an ‘economic gift’ for itself, RMGC features the following message which conveys a rather contrasting tone placing the corporate intervention at a high-national priority:

The Romanian government has designated the Rosia Montana region as a “disadvantaged area”…Our plans call for the creation of over 2,300 jobs (…).  

The hidden messages behind the few dots after the first sentence may be interpreted critically as to convey the idea that, ‘we (the corporation) can do the job of the state’, ‘we can provide for the deficiency of a weak state’ ‘since the state was ‘incapable to valorize the area (and it only labeled as ‘disadvantaged”) we are capable to help and transform disadvantage into an advantage’. As Aretxaga was arguing about the continuing relevance of statehood practices within contemporary globalized times “there is not a deficit of state but an excess of statehood practices; too many actors competing to perform as state”\textsuperscript{100}. This idea complements a common perception in Rosia about a ‘weak’ state: it may very well be that the image of such state is in itself a ‘self-fulfilling’ prophecy, a social construction to which the corporation itself has contributed. Here is where one can read the hidden partnership between the State (as a body that supports the fluidity of Capital) and the business sector despite the invoked premise of an ‘actual’ incapacity that the state is experiencing.

Gabriel’s website started by presenting the ‘10 truths’ about its operations, which supposedly provide for all the things that a ‘community’ needs in order to exist and that the Romanian state failed to provide: it features itself as a ‘state of the art mining facility’ that has proven its record of responsible mining, ‘respects’ the culture and the heritage, ‘values’ Rosia’s community, provides for the environment because ‘there is no other plan to clean up’ (the

communist industrial damage), provides job opportunities where no one else does, plays by the rules of ‘honesty’ and ‘trust’ and believes in partnership, respects the world-class standards and adopts best practices. Needless to remind ourselves about the consequences of such an externalization of responsibilities to actors that do not have a ‘mandate’ and hence cannot be accountable! There are important consequences of the assumed marginality of the state and the increased role of corporations in defining the rules of economy alone. As Rupert argues:

Capitalism’s structural separation of the ‘economic’ from the ‘political’ may have crucial ideological effects: for it enables the wage relations to take on the appearance of a voluntary exchange between abstract individuals in the market; while at the same time, the state may appear as a class neutral public sphere in which abstract individuals may interact as formally equal citizens pursuing politics of self-interest.  

Furthermore, land is devoid of other meanings and is mentioned only as its use-capacity calculated in plans: “Revised Land Use Plan also incorporates the relocation and resettlement of all areas affected by the development of a new mine; Revised Land Use Plan approved by all local, county and federal levels of government”¹⁰² These appear only as formalized ‘natural’ procedural forms that are to be filled. These procedures are legitimate as they conform to existing World Bank directives and the Romanian legal requirements. From the very beginning of the controversy, in 1999, we notice the tendency to promote Gabriel’s project as a self-evident and legal solution for the development of the area: “Similar to other European countries, Romania has legislation regarding the protection of archaeological sites, historic monuments and historic settlements. These laws are not designed to prohibit or prevent development.”¹⁰³

Resettlement starts early in 2002 through negotiation of individual financial packages (rather contested by many Rosienii as we shall see in the next chapter). In 2005 the Gabriel Corporation announces the appointment of Michael Steyn as its General Manager, a person who was responsible for the ‘successful’ resettlement of approximately 20,000 local residents, for the development by Gold Fields of the Tarkwa gold mine in Ghana, West Africa.

The website makes reference to other cases of ‘successful’ relocations in Peru or Tanzania, accomplished by the Planning Alliance, the ‘independent’ consultant from Toronto, Ontario, that has been hired for the same process to be implemented in Rosia Montana. With this new leadership team the corporate texts started to circulate an important message: the project "is the only way to improve the environment around Rosia Montana (...) that will clean up environmental pollution resulting from centuries of earlier mining; it will bring high-skilled, high-paying jobs to a village where unemployment today exceeds 50% -- and it will provide a steady stream of tax revenues to the Romanian Government."\(^{104}\) The corporation promotes itself as a responsible company that will invest heavily in the re-construction of the area even before it makes any profit: “We're looking at a total cost of bringing the Rosia Montana mine into production of at least half a billion dollars or more -- before we produce the first gram of gold."\(^{105}\)

A new website is created in 2006 for the RMGC to present this offer in more details with the declared purpose of telling the so-called “real story” of the controversy around their proposed mining project. This is the headline on its homepage which briefly presents the “real story” as follows:


\(^{105}\) Ibid.
For decades, Romania’s Rosia Montana region has been characterized by economic decline, environmental degradation, cultural distress and community anxiety. Today, there is a real plan for a more hopeful future. Gabriel is committed to building a state-of-the-art mining facility that will reinvigorate the local economy, while setting world-class standards for environmental and social responsibility.\(^{106}\)

The area is described as an already dying community and environment that has been mined for centuries „from the time of Caesar to the days of Ceausescu, and owes its name – “red mountain” - to stream waters turned red from toxic runoff produced by 2000 years of gold mining.\(^{107}\) Moreover, as the website clearly expresses, this mining project is the best and only way for the region and its people: this „inevitability” and lack of alternatives is clearly implied as it can be easily read in many of the commercials and TV spots they funded as well as on their webpage.

Our project is the only viable development for the Rosia Montana valley. By opposing our project, the NGO Alburnus Maior is preventing any opportunity, and any choice, for the development of the community in Rosia Montana. (…)What we offer is the opportunity for the people in Rosia Montana to decide their own future. This project will not go forward without their support.\(^{108}\)

Usually messages are accompanied by pictures that evidence those spaces that have been mined before and the rivers colored by minerals. Pictures are surprising only the „ugly” sites of the area with obvious omission of the still beautiful surviving nature. The project will, according to the corporation, stop further pollution of the area and will protect the environment by cleaning the waters through a modern management and treatment of water, by planting trees to counteract deforestation needed for the mining project and will even ‘boost’ biodiversity.


\(^{108}\) “The Rosia Montana Project will not go forward without the support of the community”, Press release on March 27th, 2006, see RMGC’s website http://www.rmgc.ro.
The “Save Rosia Montana!” slogan used by the opponents has thus been counter-used by the corporation in order to suggest that indeed, they have to save Rosia Montana from those people who wish to keep it in the current damaged state. What is obviously left out is that, as other Rosienii say, this much anxiety, distress and disintegration has been only accelerated by the corporation coming in Transylvania (as Rosienii tell us). What is also left out (and on the contrary, emphasized by the counter-power of the opponents) is that despite some environmental degradation, the area is still considered by many Romanians and tourists as a wonderful place to live in surrounded by mountains and waters that should be protected from further damage (as in the picture below usually appearing on the Alburnus Maior’s website or of other opponents). Most of all, what is mostly unclear is how a mining operation can be ‘protective’ of nature and land in general and especially in the light of extensive explosive use of cyanide. The opponents however asked: How can cyanide leaching be ‘environmentally friendly’ and how will the ecosystem will not be at least disturbed if not destroyed by mining?
However, for corporate purposes, the village is already considered damned given that the state-company can no longer function especially after 2007 when Romania becomes part of the EU as it does not meet the EU standards; this leaves 1000 people jobless unless mining continues under private ownership.

In addition, one can also notice an obsessive repetition of the word “modern” in all public official materials of the corporation; what is implied is a necessary “upgrading” of the situation of the region and its people as an urgency and inevitability to be achieved only through this project. This modernization is demonstrated by declared compliance with EU standards and other international standards regarding mining technology, the environment and the use of cyanide, strengthened by the previous similar experiences in “vibrant communities” from countries such as the U.S., Spain, Sweden, Finland, Australia, or New Zealand.

The publicly traded, Toronto-based company would apply modern extraction methods demonstrated elsewhere to be both profitable and far less harmful to land and water, and also undertake a full-scale ecological reclamation project unprecedented in the region. Financed by Gabriel, these efforts would restore not only lands affected by its own new mine, but also water systems severely harmed over decades of negligence by state-run mining.  


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Portraying Rosia Montana as a poor village in decline has been a continuous tool of intimidation and pressure in the power strategy of the RMGC. Communicating the understanding of a landscape (soil, lakes/rivers) as voided or inappropriate simultaneously creates and destroys opportunities for some groups or others, silencing some while empowering others. It is important to notice that, over the last seven years, despite the repeated promise for job creation and investments or infrastructure (the benefits the corporation will bring to the village), depopulation is growing. Despite this situation, under the headline “The First Step to a Better Future” few publicity materials have been issued by RMGC in order to promote the idea that the corporation is interested in the flourishing of the community: messages like “we invest in Romania” “our solution for Rosia Montana” or “a financial loan is a human right” are all pointing out to the “issue to be handled” portrayal of the village and its people. Focus is placed on the entrepreneurial spirit that is lacking, the need for growth, the need for self-discovery and reinvention of the local people as money-worthy economic agents. This image of the ‘new local’ that the corporation is trying to create is a tempting one for many of the Rosienii in Rosia dreaming about the benefits of capital economy. As Shapiro argues:

In the absence of alternative discursive possibilities for constituting the self, one cannot oppose power because, to the extent that power is only thought within the confines of the narrow sovereignty/rights discourse, it is represented as something else; it is masked in the guise of caring, curing, education, evaluation, motivating, and resolving disputes.\(^{110}\)

\(^{110}\) Shapiro, *The Politics of Representation*, p. 18
Private investment is represented in the colonial fashion of pious social mission for the benefit of those not yet ‘grown’ or ‘appropriate’ – channels capital and know-how, alleviates unemployment, brings new commodities and therefore it is welcome to the consumer masses. This projection makes the RMGC look as if it is described rather than contrived: it is depoliticized i.e. claiming to deliver the truth rather than one (political) discourse among others.

The corporation is interested in acquiring the land (and not merely the individual residences of Rosienii) securing itself the property over the main (underground) resources. Therefore, relocation of most Rosienii appears as necessary despite the different nature of the arguments offered in support of this relocation that refer to the scarcity of the village: lacking advanced schooling, medical care, proper heating and water supply. In this context it is surprising that the corporation insists in promising „a strong and diversified local economy to a place for the first time in two millennia no longer solely dependent on mining“. As the Rosienii asks themselves now „for whom?”
Greenwashing

Initially, Gabriel Resources described itself as a resource company involved in the exploration and development of mineral properties in Central and Eastern Europe with focus on Romania. However, starting with 2005 one can already notice a transformation in the rhetoric: the brief description repeated in most official public documents has sounded like this: „Gabriel is a Canadian based resource company committed to responsible mining and sustainable development in the communities in which it operates.” The alterations in discourse to emphasize ‘responsibility’ and ‘sustainable development’ can be interpreted as a PR tactic to counteract the growing opposition coming from environmental NGOs supporting the local opposition in Rosia Montana.

This was parallel with an ‘attrition war’ of press releases waged during 2006 and 2007 in order to discredit the environmentalists who supposedly infiltrated the Rosienii in order to influence their actions in a sort of ‘false consciousness’ creation. “Mine your own business: The Dark Side of Environmentalism”, a corporation’s sponsored documentary, may be seen as the climax of this struggle. The main message conveyed by this film is that the environmentalists are the new “foes” of the poor people because they have the evil idea of keeping “the poor”- poor and “the peasants” peasants, and for that they oppose modernization and progress.111 The trailer of this movement starts with the following statement: “A dangerous force is denying the DREAMS of the worlds’ poorest people.”

Ecologists are, thus, portrayed as a manipulative group forcing poor people to think, work and live in a way that perpetuates their poverty. The documentary also presents the story of a

local young man from Rosia Montana, Mr. Gheorghe Lucian, who is taken to Madagascar to see how other poor people are suffering because of the ‘green’ opposition to development and who’s main statement is “I know what I need: I need a job” as a counter-reaction to the ‘green lessons’ of self-sufficient autonomous life-style.

The inter-textuality, as suggested by the movie, the corporation best knows what people need (and the proof is the modern life-style that most people in the West enjoy so why not wish the same for Third World countries?) and has the means to offer (as opposed to the opposition or even the states which have no resources for such development). There is no doubt that development has to be not only ‘top-down’ (where the people become employers and have little to do but conform to existing business plans) but also foreign (Western).

The story of the documentary places the controversy on the global agenda of ecologist movements and shows examples of similar cases in countries in the South. The controversy is not only one on “development versus ecology” but also over the authenticity of the opposition to mining itself, whether the ‘subaltern can speak for itself’. By casting doubts over the credibility of the resistance, the corporation (whose position is voiced by a supposedly neutral journalist and visitor) suggests that there is a sort of conspiracy environmental movement who is planning, globally, to keep people poor, indoctrinating them about values that are not theirs, and keeping them away from material and financial modern benefits.

What is left out is that movements such as Chipko tree huggers in India, the rubber tappers of Brasil, or mobilization against large dams by potentially displaced people, may be a

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113 Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (eds), Selected Subaltern Studies, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988).
survival imperative for the poor, whose existence is not being assured by the market economy or by the welfare state.

While the discourse of development appears to be valid and non-questionable because it is legitimated by international institutions (thus, it’s character as a ‘savior’ of a situation it itself might be creating is rarely thought of), the discourse of cultural and environmental protection with its emphasize on “Save Rosia Montana” is portrait as exogenous, inappropriate and even dangerous.

It is interesting to observe that both, the corporation network of supporters as well as the opposition movement are invoking the non-representative character and tells the other party to “stop saving us”: on the one side, some people consider that economic development should be carried out by the local/national actors for themselves with their own rules; on the other side, others consider that only foreign investors can and will make economy prosper and, thus, they represent the ‘real’ interest. Here is an illustrative quote on the RMGC’s website, a message from ‘the community’ to the famous actress Vanessa Redgrave, who visited Rosia in 2006 with the declared purpose to campaign against the mine and support the local opposition. No doubt, while Vanessa Redgrave could not possibly represent the Rosienii, the ‘real’ voice of the Rosienii was presented on the corporation’s website:

When you condemn the mining profession, without any other viable alternatives for long and average term development, you condemn our future. You said you did it to save our environment: But our village is polluted now, from almost 2000 years of poor mining practices. A new and modern mine will actually help make our streams and rivers cleaner. A powerful economy means a healthy environment; poverty means misery! You argue that you want to save our village: But we have 70% unemployment. No full-time doctor. No regular running water. Only wood to burn for heat in the winter. If the mining project doesn’t start as soon as possible, the inhabitants have to start wandering, looking for a new chance of survival. We don’t think that this is the salvation
Two main observations are crucial here. When the corporation is communicating this message it is not merely ‘representing’ or reinforcing some local’s perspective; it is also constructing and perpetuating it. Moreover, the corporation has been significantly capitalizing on two apparently contrasting ideas: first, the communist legacies and second, the new fears of global neo-liberal insecurities. The communist legacies of need for ‘wage-earning’ and job security have been widespread especially in the context of post-communist economic disintegration. Thus, the promises in terms of job creation have prevailed in the corporate discourse. Here we are prompted to the nature of ‘emergent’ markets that are ‘emergent’ precisely because they are beneficial for the new capital infiltration.

The corporation is playing on old feelings of securities and stability that were commonly appreciated by the citizens in communist countries and poses as the ‘only possible’ provider of such new securities by providing jobs and other facilities. Actually the corporation has gone as far as to substitute itself into both the state and civil society by claiming that it will not only provide for a community to grow economically but also culturally and environmentally as well as reiterate the rich archeological patrimony that the Rosia’s land is housing. Second, this comes in contrast to the more fragmentary and disrupted future of Rosia without such an investor; the fears of global insecurities and of forced economic immigration are present in the mindset of citizens in Romania and have been an issue for both camps (as we shall see in the next chapter). Thus, the corporation supposedly has the ‘merit’ of creating local and national opportunities and thus preventing economic migration.

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Another message posted on the corporation’s website, this time from the ‘miners’ of Rosia Montana, further evokes this paradox. If the accusation that the corporation is endangering life in Rosia Montana will be viewed as a ‘lie’, its association with the widespread negative perception of Romanians about the selling of public resources to foreign companies is considered a losing attitude for which ‘we have sinned’ enough. Supposedly, the selling of gold to RMGC will (no doubt) benefit the Rosienii and not other foreign companies. The implication of this illusion is that, the RMGC is authentically national.

We have sinned for a long time because of the motto "WE ARE NOT SELLING OUR COUNTRY!" and now some people come and want the area to stay pristine, Romanians to just take their lives and go away for begging and stealing. We do NOT want to work anymore for the prosperity of those who had enjoyed quietness in front of history waves through the sacrifice of this people, but we want to work for the our prosperity, for the prosperity of our families and of Romanian people.115

By opposing, you condemn the people from Rosia Montana to something that will kill them worse than cyanide: illiteracy, poverty deriving from unemployment. The agriculture from Rosia Montana is not a solution for the moment; it is not agriculture for the 21st century, but a subsistence one. We cannot even talk about tourism as we do not have roads, infrastructure. I think that in order to develop agriculture and tourism we need a reasonable monthly pay-off, which shall be reinvested in all these structures. Or, so far, I think that the only reasonable and real investment is Gabriel Rosia Montana. We are too rich not be able to live an honorable life, here at home!116

The underlying message that the RMGC corporate discourse promotes has to do with what Appadurai called “production fetishism”: the illusion that transnational capital, management and labor is somehow locally controlled, belongs to national productivity flows and respects national territorial sovereignty. This illusion masks the fact that in this equation, social and production relations are transnational and generate alienation that is twice intensified given

the complex dynamic of global flows. The obvious implication of this illusion is that, by thus legitimizing the corporate presence and in contrast to the illegitimate forces of “alien” environmental movements, the RMGC is an authentic option smoothly absorbed into the story of national development, a naturalization of (corporate) production relations into the landscape of local ambivalence. The RMGC is part of the nation, it has Romanian leaders and workers, and it is almost a non-sense to consider it alien. By contrast, the ‘alien’ Romanians ‘should’ reject, is the extravagant Western ecologist, disrespectful of the country’s needs or interests.

In discrediting the ecologists, the corporate language in 2007 and 2008 seems to suggest that there is no other reason for the “controversy” around this mining project but the one about cyanide use. If cyanide would be avoided, it would be common –sense (except for foreign Green opposition) to accept the project. There seems to be no doubt and thus no debate on the meaning of development as such. To minimize the ‘green arguments’ in this respect the corporation is invoking the same authoritative tools, i.e., global organizations that make the rule of global politics.

It is, further, interesting to see how it makes such invocation when writing to the Soros Foundation, an institution which is supposedly promoting ‘democratic legality’ and thus protecting such establishments. As one can read in the Open letter to Renate Weber and the Soros Foundation dated in august 2007, the rejection of cyanide use in gold extraction is illegal by virtue of its legality under the EU and other global institutions; to oppose it means to oppose the entire global politics which makes the resistance ‘abnormal’ indeed:

Is the G-8 wrong about cyanide?
Are the heads of the world’s foremost democracies violators of the law?
Is the UN a co-conspirator in the lawless use of cyanide?
Or is it the case that the Soros website simply chooses to mislead its visitors, in hopes that they will remain ignorant of the facts?117

Treating Rosia Montana as a problem of mere environmental concern could reveal an ideological scripting regarding the ‘allocation of danger’ as Shapiro calls it when describing the case of Bhopal incident in India, 1984. One the one hand, it is relevant to pinpoint the depoliticizing effect of naming such complex controversy as ‘environmental’: any damage could then easily be assimilated to the language of technicality, management and accident, another externality no one takes responsibility for. Policy-making and politics in this equation is more or less an impediment in the way of market modernizing and profit making; reduced to partial silence, the state apparatus here should, for the corporate purposes, be mobilized (employed or ‘bribed’ by the market actors) to create the appropriate atmosphere for the celebration of capital, merely reproducing the discourse of developmental economics to naturalize it as the only ‘politics’.

Such a predictable and manageable government is the necessary geo-political instrument in the spread of the developmentalism, mystifying the exploitative relation between marginal and central regimes of power. Consequently, certain modes of representation (of landscapes, people etc.) are promoted in this operational language of the powerful in order to (re)produce allegiance to such a technical leadership.

On the other hand, minimizing the Rosia as an ‘environmental’ issue has been strategic for corporate supporters as it could become an easy target for discrediting: how can environmental activism be ‘representative’ for the Rosienii in Rosia when they do not enjoy the luxury to ‘save

flowers and mountains’ at the expense of their survival? According to this perspective, environmental concerns are ‘new’ post-industrial concerns that no not fit the landscape of industrial ‘pre-modern’ Romania. In this sense, it is important to highlight the Rosienii’ reaction to name their resistance as a ‘citizen action’ rather than ‘environmental activism’ (as we shall discuss in the following chapter).

Despite the attempt to discredit the environmentalists and given the few legal actions taken to court by Alburnus Maior which blocked the corporate project from starting, the rhetoric of politically correct and environmentally-friendly started to be even more powerful in 2008 but with another change in highlight: especially in the context of the economic crisis, the corporation “sells” itself on TV with a seemingly “new” project that is protective of nature and more, nurturing biodiversity.

This new approach is accompanied by pictures of people taking care of baby-trees and of land and reflects values of environmentalism in support for their project. Despite the rejection of the environmentalists’ arguments - especially in the first years of the controversy the focus being placed more on job creation and poverty - the corporation eventually started to portray itself as “the good environmentalist”.

After pressing for other social issues that were supposedly relevant for the village (such as ‘poverty’), the corporation seems pressured to admit that environmental problems are relevant. This acknowledgment can be seen in the change of PR tools and may be viewed as mere corporate responsibility tactics. Here are some interesting quotes from the July 2010 edition of a newsletter called “The Rosia Montana Project” mailed by the RMGC to many institutions in Romania:

Green before yellow - for RMGC, trees are just as important as gold. (…) After the mine is closed, all affected are will be ecologically restored. (…) Animal species will develop freely in the project framework.
The authenticity of this change is not at issue here just as the point of this dissertation is not to establish who is “right” or “wrong”. The point to make is that politics is a struggle between competing discursive coalitions and policy making is the re-conceptualized product of this competition. Environmental discourses compete with other discourses such as the development discourse. As in the case of any discourse, problems are socially constructed: environmental problems that are not locally visible, i.e. soil degradation versus climate change, require conceptual frameworks and analytical capacities that are usually the privilege of experts. Put it differently, environmental problems are also socially constructed. This is not to say that they do not exist but that there is no one universal interpretation and thus they are basically and socially contested.

Irrespective of the many files written by the corporation to prove that they are eventually “environmentally friendly”, the tones of technical language cannot possibly be understood outside the ‘scientific’ knowledge discourse, supposedly inaccessible to the majority which is in itself a denial of the possibility to actually criticize the project in the first place.

By integrating the environmental discourse into the developmentalist discourse the corporation is appealing to similar ‘scientific and technological’ language. As Escobar was arguing, “Development had to rely on the production of knowledge that could provide a scientific picture of a country’s social and economic problems and resources”\textsuperscript{118}, and since scientific understanding is the privilege and preference of only a few, what is left for the both parties is another space where the contention remains a matter of belief, need or choice, a \textit{differend}.

However, the RMGC campaign of contestation of environmentalism (as a false or even dangerous concern) basically placed environmental protection on the public agenda. Thus, the corporation is currently promising to provide the Romanian state with a substantial financial deposit to serve for ecological rehabilitation of the area after the project is implemented. As Foucault argued, discourse is constitutive of “reality” and it joins together power and knowledge: a crucial moment of empowering previously disempowered. Even articulating environmentalism as a ‘false problem’ transformed it into a problem. Thus it is important to remember the role of any discourse (also the environmental discourse) in constituting subjects and rendering them governable also through self-conceptualizing themselves as “green(er)”.

**No nostalgia-rights**

Under the headline “Politics” the corporation explains on its website about the “actual” reasons for opposition to the project and clearly equates it with mere “nostalgic communism” while mentioning the name of a major political member of the Social Democrat Party (Adrian Nastase), usually associated after the revolution with former communist leaders. There is no doubt here that the issue is not merely ‘neutral’ or ‘economic’ anymore and that the claims they make to the land and resources is a political issue. However, it becomes clearly political only when some party politics influences appear:

In Romania and Hungary, groups opposed to the Rosia Montana project play on old resentments of foreign companies and of capitalism in general – as in the widely quoted remark of former Romanian Prime Minister Adrian Nastase that no one stands to gain from mining but outsiders, who “will take the gold and leave the cyanide.”

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Although there is no mentioning of the word ‘communist’, the ‘inter-textuality’ i.e. consists of the connection with the former Prime-minister Adrian Nastase which reproduced the widespread ‘resentment’ towards the Social Democratic party commonly associated with the former communists who seized the power after the revolution. Clearly, the allusion was that the identity of the opponents to the corporate project is one built on a relationship kept alive with the ‘old’ communist elites that are opposed to capitalism per se. Therefore, the function of the inter-textuality with its defensive/offensive attitude is meant to take away attention from the actual project and erode the legitimacy of any opposition to it (as happened with the ‘other’ identified enemy, the ‘greens’).

There are also important media representatives who (more or less directly) support the corporation and discredit the opposition movement by indicating to an ‘evil’ ideological interest of the ‘greens’ or the ‘communists’. One of the famous journalists openly supporting the corporate project is Ioan T. Morar who is often quoting Ion Iliescu (former member of nomenklatura and President of Romania after 1989 for more than eight years) to associate his thinking with the opposition to the project. Iliescu used to say that “the capitalists are only pursuing profits!”; thus, according to Morar, anyone who would also argue similarly (in the case of Rosia, the so-called ‘greens’) are ‘communists’ or Marxists in disguised, which is apparently enough to ‘name and shame’. Another journalist is Florin Puscas who criticizes the resolution of the European Parliament to ban cyanide use in mining by appealing to accusations of communism disguised as fashionable ecologism:

Nothing is accidental in world politics. The games made in the European Parliament must have a purpose. Whose interest is sought? It looks good to be ecologist in Europe, to delight the preferences of nostalgic communists and to protest but Romania needs investments and jobs. Otherwise, we will be the fools of Europe again and we’ll die waving the flag of the ‘greens’.  

What seems to be significant is the ‘old’ attitudes that are encouraged by former communists and that are basically igniting aversion towards capitalism and foreign companies. This discourse is no doubt a moral judgment: it is ‘right’ to be permissive to capital flows and it is ‘wrong’ otherwise. The “resentment” to capitalism is a clear enough indication of the “evil” nature of this opposition. This is the corporate perspective on the nature of the distribution of social goods. This is especially important in their opinion given the implications of this resentment that is, testing Romania’s transition to a market economy. This, as the corporation mentions, explains the cautious attitude of the European Union.

It is also interesting to see how this type of message has rather been prevalent in the first years of the resistance (when the liberal party was governing) and rather disappeared slowly from the discursive luggage of the corporate texts. However, the label of ‘nostalgic communist’ has continued to resonate with respect to the opposition to the project through the words of the corporate supporters who would use the memories of communist poverty to push for foreign investments. As Escobar was arguing, “The right climate had to be created including a commitment to capitalist development, curbing nationalism, control of the Left, the working class and the peasantry.”

If commitment to capitalism was rather common-sense, the opposition came as a surprise; scapegoats had to be created and the former communist elites as well as

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123 Escobar, Encountering Development, p. 33.
nationalist tendencies were at hand. However, the transformations in the nature of the opposition movement have placed the corporate struggle on a different track which rather subverted the traditional ideological spectrum it had initially imagined.

The situated meaning of the allusion to communism is part of a discursive (evaluative) model, grounded in the specific context of the post-communist ‘transition’ to capitalism with its assumption of unquestioned pro-capitalist path. The failure of communist means of industrialization in Eastern Europe has been proclaimed after 1989 as the success of the capitalist means: thus, economic growth was to be considered as an individual (private) enterprise, rational and risk-taking while the state, a mere facilitator of this ventures. The modernization story in its capitalist fashion has been connected to a discourse of state neutralization that made a large difference in the effects of industrialization despite this being the convergence point of both capitalism and communism in terms of development paths.

Since the modern narrative emphasized the individual as the sole meaningful reality, the state (as any other form of collective imaginative creation) was to be viewed cautiously and impeded from controlling economy and the individual. Its laws and procedures were only to be allowed as nurturing the desired competitive and individualistic nature of modern society. This is, of course, what the Communist party (in Eastern Europe) did not allow and fall into a race of industrialization in the mirror but with different means. This is also what the Romanian governments have done with respect to the RMGC in Rosia; however, its overall silence and vacillation has also been an obstacle for the implementation of the mining project. While largely benefiting from association with the corporation, state officials conveniently supported the project in times of economic distress and questioned it in times of elections.
Moreover, in the global race for growth and supremacy, nations are the main subjects: as Krishna argues, methodological individualism was coupled with methodological nationalism in the sense that the nation state was largely responsible for its development: growth was seen as national, ahistorical and autochthonous. The tendency has been to disregard the relational, interdependent and contingent character of global inequalities and the Western clothes of modernization processes. Just as in the case of an individual, if a country is poor, is only up to it to chow the drive and discipline to change that and succeed in becoming rich. The industrial revolution in the West was to be seen as the context where:

“improved technology and the superior organization of free labor, where the pressures of the market and the possible loss of livelihood served as an impetus to enhance labor productivity rather than explicit coercion (slavery or serfdom) as in the preceding epochs. (...) The emerging divide between the public/political and the private/economic, itself a constitutive moment in the emergence of modernity, concealed (or better still, naturalized) the exploitative character or capitalist production.”

Being on the ‘left’ side of the ideological spectrum cannot possibly be considered ‘healthy’, ‘balanced’ thinking especially in Romania although it may be “cool” in America where these activists or journalists studied. Thus, Morar considers that the similarity of arguments between the opposition to the project and communist ideas is not only obvious but also ‘sinister’. In addition, it is not enough that the ‘greens’ are actually ‘communists’ from this perspective but they are also Hungarian (the nationalist accusations are to be discussed below). As we have showed above the corporation, as a representative of capital economy, has capitalized by using both positively and negatively the memory of communism and the historical obsession of the Romanian culture with the Stranger (Strainul).

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125 Krishna, *Globalization and Post-colonialism*, p. 25
Testing sovereignty

This test is referring to the “foreign” and especially Hungarian support for the opposition, a sign of dangerous conspiracies to “take back” Transylvania. This “imagined” fear of annexation has been continuously manipulated by the corporate representatives in order to question the autonomy and authenticity of local opposition. Hence, according to the corporation, the case should be an essential concern to all Romanians interested in preserving their country intact.

Let us examine in somewhat more detail a longer example of RMGC’s discourse. This example below was taken from a press conference held on September 5, 2007 in Bucharest and consists of several fragments from the leading speech by Alan R. Hill. The speech is meant to invite a vote against the NGOs’ legislative initiative to ban cyanide use in Romania, an initiative that has been supported by UDMR (the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania, a party that has always been in some government coalition in power after 1989) and the GRP (the Great Romania Party, a nationalist party). The document of the speech transcript is titled “The FACTS OF THE MATTER: Who is behind the opposition to the Rosia Montana Project – And why it matters to all Romanians” and is again articulating the supposedly scientific neutral knowledge of ‘facts’ and ‘news’ discharged of any human faculty of meaning creation and imagination:

Our news is extremely important because as a consequence it deals with Romanian sovereign decisions. Romania is now a full member state of the European Union. Everything Romania does should be in line with the European Union standards, laws and practices. This is 100 percent valid for our project. (…) My question today is: Why? Why the vocal opposition to our project? Why – when we have made 39 major changes in our project over the past two years to meet

126 This in itself constituted a paradox that I shall refer to in another chapter, i.e. the fact that the Hungarian Union Party and the Great Romania Party have consistently supported the local opposition against the corporation despite the fact that they themselves as parties were traditional ‘foes’.
stakeholder concerns and to make our project even stronger. (...) The vocal opposition ignores these facts. Why? When an Independent Group of International Experts found our project – and I quote – “well-developed.” When the major banks’ technical consultants have concluded that our sustainable development programs and project are Equator Principle-compliant. Why? When we have spent more than $10 million to date on patrimony, on a program, that Council of Europe calls “an exemplary model of responsible development.”? (...) Those working against our project have a simple answer to those questions and a simple storyline -- and they stick to it: To hear them tell it, this is a story of a Romanian David versus a Canadian Goliath – a small village NGO fighting to stop a foreign mining company. Local good guy – foreign bad guy: Full stop.127

The superstructure or the text schemata (argumentation) of this important speech (the main ideas of this speech being reiterated and used in multiple other contexts) is the following: To vote for banning cyanide is basically to vote against prosperity, that is against the country’s interest and eventually that is to support the Hungarians’ steps to take back Transylvania. One can read that reproduction of power dominance has two major dimensions: the direct production of dominance, on the one hand, and the consequences of this speech in the process of the management of the public consensus on development and sovereignty of Romania.

For instance, discrediting the opponents is in itself an act of discrimination equating the resistance movement with some foreign force coming from the historical Hungarian past that sends its “ghosts” to take back its land. This fear, a common fear of Romanians, has been continuously manipulated by the corporate representatives in order to narrowly label and discredit the autonomy and authenticity of the local opposition. It may have worked as a means to gain support even from Rosienii who did not initially wish to sell their land. Such a discursive act may contribute to the use and misuse of already existing discriminative models regarding the Romanian attitudes towards minorities and especially Hungarians.

Furthermore, in analyzing discourse one looks at access to resources such as money, media, settings, genre. As indicated above, Mr. Hill’s power as the CEO is first of all defined by his active and more or less controlled access to the media as well as to the politicians’ and administration’s representatives with an interest in promoting the image of Romania as open to foreign investments. He benefits from good location and services, influence and audience, “having the floor” to say so.

Moreover, in communicative acts one can read social meanings. Besides broader social or political implications, this speech fragment signals various social meanings and categories of social interaction. The “labels” used to tell “the real nature (and ethnicity)” of the opponents not only means that the case of his opponents is discredited within the framework of a largely anti-Hungarian-autonomy opinions or even racism in Romania, but also, more politically, that the opposition to which Mr. Hill’s speech is primarily addressed is thus attacked and discredited. One cannot oppose the corporate project as this may mean opposing Romanian sovereignty!

Most of Mr. Hill’s speech is an assertion at a global level of macro-speech acts. He accuses detractors of vilification, lying and intimidation and his accusations may be heard (literally, over the radio) or read (when quoted in the press) by millions, who may thus be exposed to (also biased) information about RMGC’s opponents. The macro-semantics (the topics) of the speech are about the anti-anti opposition– where those who combat mainstream ideological or economic paradigms are themselves accused of being intolerant about other stories and discriminate against those who want to tell the “truth” about the activism against the project and its implications for poverty and Romanian sovereignty.

Alburnus Maior began as a pro-mining NGO. It was set up by local residents who felt it was better to develop the project by Romanians rather than foreigners. That all changed in 2002. That was the year that foreign professionals where brought in -- and changed the Alburnus platform,
setting up the main instrument of spreading disinformation… the Alburnus web site. You will never hear them say it, but Alburnus Maior’s web site is not registered in Romania. The Alburnus web site is registered out of Budapest by a Hungarian NGO with ties to the Soros Foundation. Alburnus Maior claims to be led by a local village farmer. But in the NGO community, it is an open secret that it is led by a foreigner; Stephanie Roth. Ms. Roth claims to live in Rosia and she advocates wood carving and agro-tourism as suitable alternatives to the high paying mining jobs which we will create – at least that’s what she tells reporters. It is very easy to comment on wood carving and agro-tourism in a poor area -- when your final refuge is your family’s residence in the UK. (...) As for being local, Alburnus Maior is anything but. In fact it could lay claim to being a new kind of NGO multi-national: it has the support of at least 17 non-Romanian organizations -- which we know of. (...) They have spent millions to oppose our project and nothing to help the local community! When anyone asks who funds them – they say: None of your business. (...) Somehow I do not believe that is in the national interest of Romania. (...) They are willing to make Romania look unstable – unpredictable – to the Western capital needed, perhaps they would be happy to see Western capital abandon this country.”

Mr. Hill has the power not only to define and redefine the topics of debate, but also to define the entire situation: by generalizing even beyond environmentalism, the real topic is education about truth and sovereignty. Mr. Hill defines opponents as being against fundamental values and interests of the Romanian state, that is, autonomy and prosperity. In addition, Mr. Hill’s identity as a corporate expert is also performed as part of a larger identity of experienced and internationally appreciated corporate representative (he won an award for responsible management but …the Hungarian Ambassador to Austria pressured Austria to take back the award). His identity is a statement for the supposedly good-intentions of the corporation in general. Plus, he comes from a Western country with a history of such modern technology use and practices.

Given the context of this ‘meaning creation’, it is important to remember that the enactment of (political) power is not limited to political decision-making, directly restricting the rights of people; more importantly, it justifies and legitimates such acts through the manipulation of public opinion, usually through the mass media (to which the corporation clearly has more

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access as it has the necessary resources to buy TV and publications’ space). This means that the corporate representatives speak not only for their supporters, but also for other elite groups, especially the media, and hence for the population at large. Eventually the manipulative purpose is also to influence (if not violently impose) particular development paths in Romania.

Monopolies of thought
What does it cost to be dominated and subjugated in the names of healing, curing, nurturing, and educating?129

This dissertation’s purpose has been to theorize about the nature of ‘resistance’ in post-communist states such as Romania within the context of neo-liberal (capitalist) contamination and the development crisis – this crisis is a political and economic project but also a cultural discourse that shapes society. I am referring to what Escobar calls ‘developmentalism’ as a discursive field, a monopoly over imagination, producing social reality and articulating of power and knowledge. Since neoliberal globalization can be viewed as the political and ideological “child of the modernization school”130, this crisis is to be placed within the broader context of modernity’s crisis as a civilizational project.131

After the Second World War it became customary to equate “development” with modern progress which also meant for instance quantification and monetarization of poverty/wealth and overall “normalization” and uniformization of living conditions along Western criteria. These processes did not avoid the Eastern European Balkan area: however, they were halted as the

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130 Krishna, Globalization and Post-colonialism: hegemony and resistance in the twenty-first century, p. 9
131 Escobar, Encountering Development.
Yalta geopolitical division in 1945 placed this space in a different sphere of power, one for which another “New Man” standard was engineered.

In both instances – economic progress through capitalist or communist industrialization – these processes implied a denial of traditional local understandings of lifestyle, silencing of cultural voices that did not favor the mainstream modern life-style. Both capitalism and socialism were “married in their attachment to modernity.” Consequently, as “knowledge is always constituted in reflection of interests”, the fall of communism gave to the West prevalence to the capitalist discourse of development.

As the analysis of the corporate discourse showed, there is considerable emphasize on modernization as the new (though old) mantra which the local and nationals of Romania should be vowing. This is because communist modernization has not been enough to discipline subjects into individualist profit-oriented agents but rather allowed for traditional legacies to linger. Plus, the new modernization wave has to fight not only the traditional crusade but also the communist legacies and the Green tendencies.

What the Canadian corporation found out about the local people opposing the project does not fit or cannot be translated into the language of development and thus, it falls back into constructing the ‘Rosienii’ who ‘do not understand things’ or ‘cannot speak for themselves’ and are easily manipulated by various other actors to oppose. Surely becoming a salaried worker in the implementation of the project has been a strong motivation to support the project and even to sell (some Rosienii who sold their houses and live in the neighboring areas still hope to be hired in the mine); personal perspectives are pre-given in the sense that they flow out of the most

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available discursive practices, mostly reproducing these unreflectively. Identities are scripted into these most available discourses informing out ‘truths’ about ourselves.

However, the suspicion on the possibility of this project to both create jobs for the Rosienii on a long term and preserve the areas for life to be possible is haunting motivations and hence, identities are torn. Opinions and perceptions are diluted and unstable given this uncertain climate when there is no general acceptance on the benefits of such a project and even the corporate arguments have changed throughout time. This is how one of the Rosienii expresses this suspicion that lead to the formation of a local NGO, Alburnus Maior, to officially and collectively oppose the corporate project:

In 1997 the corporation has started to influence the population by giving flyers with information about the many jobs they would create in the area… I was asked to make drilling networks; it was then when I realized that something is wrong because they started to drill every two meters, with no clear direction, close to people’s homes. The cattle started to get sick, and loose babies, even people started to feel ill and throw up or losing their taste; it became clear that they were using some toxic substances and that the problem was serious. In 1999 we announced the Environmental Guard. In 2000, the “Meridian” Miners’ trade union which was against the corporate project met Frank Timis in Rosia and other official guests were present; Timis admitted his intention to make massive exploitation at the surface. The people who were present there started to talk a lot about poverty; but as I had some expertise I asked about the actual project: why the numbers and the presentations are always changing? What are you going to do with the waste? Really how many jobs will you create? Are you really talking about 30 000? But this would mean they hit each other with the pickaxes! Andrei the Bishop who seems in favor of the project was asked : how come you agree with destruction of churches and graves?’ He became pale as he was probably ‘perfumed’ (bribed) as most of those who support Gold …At the end of this meeting a Deputy called Tabara, from the PUNR Party came to me and said: ‘these guys are bandits they will eat you away! Make something like an association to defend yourself!’

Corporate efforts to legitimize its presence is ‘surprisingly’ similar to the nation-state building narrative practices in the sense of “imposing a coherence on what is instead fragmentary, arbitrary and power-driven conditions of historical assemblage, masked in various
mythic narrations of emerging consensualidad”\textsuperscript{134} and suggesting a benign narrative of integration and consensual living. The corporate way of wording displayed in the analysis above seems to be asking the question: „why save this land (when we are already saving it)?” For the RMGC, the unexpected force of the collective action against its project has been a major blow to which it had to respond. Politics around this case has thus been re-written over and over again depending on the discourses that prevailed.

In the case of Romania, the modern development discourse left the Rosienii - and the people who would rather prefer “mountains over gold” – invisible. Their struggle over the last ten years has been to “become political” i.e. visible. It is this way that we make, later on, the connection between the discourse on environment and the discourse on development relevant for cultural and identity politics. As reflected in the next chapters, all other narratives or discourses, (environmental, ethnographic cultural) constitute identities, expectations and responsibilities and “discipline” individuals and societies.

\textsuperscript{134} Shapiro, “Globalization and the Politics of Discourse”, p. 10.
Chapter III

‘Save Rosia Montana’: Campaigning for the ‘Truth’

Once upon a time there were three little pigs living in the spirit of mutual respect and in harmony with nature. They all build up their house out of indigenous materials and were living a quiet life in peace and self-determination. One day, a wolf appeared in the area and the little pigs excited his appetite physically and ideologically. The wolf started chasing the pigs; he destroyed the first house while the pigs were screaming: ‘your aggressive tactic will not scare the pigs that defend their culture and home’. The pig’s house was transformed into a bananas’ plantation. Moving to the next house, the wolf also managed to destroy it while the pigs were screaming ‘Go to hell you carnivore, you imperialist exploiter’; The pig was condescendingly smiling: ‘They are so childish! Too bad they have to die; nothing can stop progress.’ The house was transformed into a luxury resort with buildings imitating native models, selling local traditions as souvenir. The wolf continued with the third house: the pigs started singing solidarity chants and sending protest letter to the UN. Trying to destroy the last house was impossible; the wolf tried and tried until he had a heart attack after eating too much fat. The three little pigs celebrated their victory and created ‘the porkcinistas’ attacking exploitative wolves.

‘Who is Rosia Montana’?

Whoever is nameless cannot speak.135

The above story belongs to a dedicated activist, Codruta, involved in the opposition to the corporate project. Her amusing manner of portraying the situation is illustrative for the purpose of this chapter: I read the above as an invitation to self-reflection and self-criticism, the finale of which is telling for the ambiguous achievement of any (dialectic) project. I was not able to interview Codruta but I once talked to her and I had access to many of her thoughts from her emails on the environmental mailing list ‘mediu.ro’ (environment.ro). From our conversation I understood that she gradually

became disappointed with the Rosienii’ in Rosia for their choice to sell, something she understood as a form of greed, a lack of solidarity and trust in the intentions of NGOs. Maybe the usage of ‘porkcinistas’ has been sarcastic to the movement itself and to its own forms of reification, a critique to their own (NGO) critique.

Starting with 2002 and increasingly after, the Rosia Montana Gold Corporation has had to face an unexpected mobilization of NGO forces and activists that have supported the local opposition in the village: the company has had to confront the well-organized NGOs both in court and in the media. Their tactics and pressure managed to block the project: the review of the Environmental Impact Assessment has been suspended since 2007 and was resumed only recently in 2010. This chapter presents and analyzes the more formal movement fostered by (mostly environmental) NGOs and other institutions opposing the corporation in an attempt to better understand the complexities of the discourse of resistance to corporate capitalism in the region.

If the first years of the Campaign were marked by clear-cut dualism of ‘us against them’ where the ‘traitors’ were those who sold and the ‘real Rosieni’ were those who refuse commodification, these binaries lost their strength in the more recent years: according to some Rosienii, even one home and family opposing would be enough to disturb the mining project planned by the corporation. “I am Rosia Montana/I am not leaving” is the message painted on the T-shirts of around thirty Rosienii who demonstrated against the corporation with the occasion of the visit of Princess Margareta of Romania and other Romanian public figures in 2007. The gradual decrease in the number of Rosienii preserving their land in Rosia has been a serious issue for concern to the anti-corporate cause. According to some Rosienii, ‘divide at impera’ (divide and conquer) was an efficient corporate strategy which accelerated depopulation.
Currently, to counteract the corporate discourse highlighting the national importance of their project, activists of the “Save Rosia Montana” campaign emphasize that Rosia is a value to all Romanians and not only to Rosienii. As Mircea Toma declared in March 2011, “The term ‘local’ should be clarified from the start. There are people who refuse to sell their property and there are those who sold and support the project”\textsuperscript{136}. His statement seems to be followed by the question: ‘Who, then, is ‘a local’? Who is Rosia Montana?’

In this chapter, campaigning for “saving” Rosia Montana will be described as illustrating another part of the \textit{differend}: a form of ‘strategic essentialism’ (as detailed in the first chapter, the power of an ‘identity’ to fight for a common cause) marking a (heterogeneous) collective of interested in the preservation of land and archaic traditions and threatened by the (hegemonic) power of the corporation. This essentialism (or attempt at homogeneity through strategic common representations) has initially been an attempt to unify the population: ‘real’ Rosieni do not sell their land. This strategic representation of the community is controversial in itself attracting criticism because it presents a ‘taken-for-granted’ alternative to the corporate project in pursuit of the possibility for ‘another world’: projects such as agro-tourism, or eco-tourism or farming are proposals satisfy the imaginary future projections of some people but they do not meet the needs and desires of others. In addition, as showed in the previous chapter, this discourse of resistance has been an easy target for corporate criticism that attempted to deny the authenticity and legitimacy of the movement especially given the extra-local origin of some activists.

This chapter will make a brief account of the strategic discourse of resistance and point out to the inner contradictions and fault-lines that reveal its contingent nature. Therefore, the chapter adds to

the argument of this dissertation regarding the ambiguity of post-communist resistance to corporate globalization by highlighting the internal fragmentations of this movement and the uncertainties of this strategic representation of the population. Testimonies, declarations and texts issued by activists will support our understanding of the context of the movement, the more professional (‘environmentalist’) positions with regard to the project and the interplays producing an ambiguous discourse of resistance. It looks at the tensions within the more formal organized ‘resistance’ process: differences with regard to the stance towards the corporate project – negotiation versus confrontation - have implications for how we conceptualize movements and understand their relative (non)ideological coherence and (dis)unity. One can argue that Alburnus Maior, the Soros Foundation and other organizations supporting the resistance to the corporation are working for the same end: to save Roşia Montana. What this “salvation” means may however, be a different story for each of them. What keeps them together in the common campaigns against the corporation is no more important than what drives them apart.

Following my trips to Rosia I realized that much of the formal resistance against the corporate project has been a NGO-led opposition against state complicity with the corporation and that much of the discourse has been strongly influenced by national and international NGOs and activists: it may be argued that it, thus, became the largest movement developed in post-communist Romania, (“Save Rosia Montana”) appropriating much of the critical language of resistance under the ‘not for sale’ slogan. This may lead us to the argument that in a society like Romania where the ‘pattern’ for social movements would rather be the ‘old’ fashioned one (preoccupied with material advantages), a new pattern has been emerging (stimulated by ‘professional’ activists), i.e., a more post-modern type concerned with protection of spiritual and cultural values. The newness of this pattern is, however, an issue for discussion: values such as these have been in themselves controversies throughout the history
of the region and their relevance may only be re-invented. The extent to which these NGO actors have had their influence is not the issue here: the degree of their power to influence the discourse of resistance cannot, however, be exaggerated as to say it, alone, incite local opposition despite this argument being put forward by the corporate supporters.

Between 2006 and 2010 I have been a (direct or virtual) witness to many protests, debates, quarrels and initiatives of these activists and one of the most striking (though subtle) observation I made was their loose bonds with both ‘allies’ and ‘ideologies’. While the opposition movement has often used the power of an ‘identity’ to fight for a common cause despite inevitable friction inherent to any group or institution – the internal quarrels tell us something about the ambiguity of the movement. I read mixed feelings among activists - disappointment, irritation, and lack of trust on all sides - the local leaders, the national NGO leaders, the foreign activists – suspicion of collaboration with the “enemy”, the corporation or the state. The ‘us versus them’ dichotomies pervade but they are also unstable, complicating the arena of resistance.

The perspectives presented in this chapter are relevant for an aesthetic understanding of political allegiances in post-communist society. As we shall see, under accusations of “communists” or “ecologists”, the opponents of the corporate project often invoke liberal values of respect for property rights and freedom of individual choice; when labeled “Soros-influenced- liberals”, the opponents invoke nationalist and ecologist beliefs. The “privileged revolutionary man” of Stuart Hall is of no relevance when analyzing such complex movements just as the “singular identity” is a too-narrow description.

The Rosia Montana Declaration

In Rosia Montana the story of a formal NGO resistance to RMGC starts in 2000 when ‘Alburnus Maior’ is created: a grassroots community organization formed by approximately 300 families from Rosia and another 100 families from Bucium (a nearby village) worried about the risks of cyanide mining and about the future of their community. The name ‘Alburnus Maior’ is symbolic: it was the ancient name of the village, one of the oldest localities of Romania, which still hides archeological vestiges of the Roman times.\textsuperscript{138}

The first official gathering in support of Alburnus happened in July, 28, 2002 in Rosia and was attended by over 300 people. This meeting produced the first Declaration in Romania after 1989: the ‘Rosia Montana Declaration’ that articulated and legitimated Alburnus’s endeavor to protest against the corporate project. I will reproduce the exact official Declaration of the Gold-Miners Association

“Alburnus Maior” regarding the investment project of Gold Corporation, and supported (signed) by a group of 25 environmental NGOs from Romania\textsuperscript{139}.

1. We believe that the project is fully in contradiction with the principles of sustainable development because: a. it has a negative social impact (900 households will be displaced, and 2000 people will be uprooted from their land and homes) b. it severely affects all environmental aspects (air, water, land) and all forms of life will be directly affected on at least 1600 hectares and indirectly on a surface that is difficult to estimate c. the exploitation will most likely use all natural resources in a short time d. it will deny any sustainable development plan (such as tourism and agro-tourism) for the region over a very long period of time.

\textsuperscript{138} The first mentions of mining activities date back from the pre-Christian cultures of about 2800 – 2500 b. Chr. The first documented mention of the village dates from the Roman period, when the name of Alburnus Maior is found on a wax plate dated 6 February 131 a. Chr., discovered together with other 25 wax plates and mining items in St. Ladislau Gallery of the St. Simon Mine in Ohaba. The importance of the gold mining is emphasised by the uncovering of three contracts for buying slaves (Corpus Inscriptiones Latinarum, III, Tab. Cer.VI, VII, 25), fundamental sources of the Roman Law and a rich inventory of tools and utensils used in the mining galleries. Andreea Chifan, ”Roșia Montana, a reflection of the Rule of Law in Romania”, study of the Soros Foundation, Romania, www.osf.ro.

2. The project contravenes the European Convention for the Protection of Landscape that was signed by Romania too.
3. The proposed gold extraction technology contravenes the Berlin Declaration from 2001 that forbids the use of cyanide as it irreversibly destroys the ecosystems.
4. It will destroy the natural, cultural and historical for an important area in the Apuseni Mountains being an important loss for the national patrimony.
5. The project is in breach of the legislation regarding environmental protection and the regime for protected natural areas.

Given the above, we request the Romanian Government:
1. Immediate withdrawal of the exploration license and final stop of the Gold Corporation work in Certej-Brad-Zlatna-Baia de Aries.
2. Adopting a strategy for sustainable development of the Rosia Montana area and the Apuseni Mountains area.140

According to Alburnus, the area and its cultural and natural heritage cannot survive a destructive enterprise such as an open-cast mine. The project means displacement of the population, around 2000 people (life cannot really continue where cyanide and constant explosions take place), destruction of four mountains, a lake of cyanide and toxic waste covering over 1000 hectares of land, demolished houses and buildings (many of them being of cultural patrimony and value such as the famous Roman Galleries) and last but not least unburying the ancestors of the local people through the destruction of 9 cemeteries and 8 churches. These are the social and environmental costs that Alburnus is refusing to ‘pay’, not to mention the cultural patrimony represented by the whole area (the first discovered village archeologically attested and dating from Roman times). Moreover, the time estimated for the project is only 17 years which does not equal long-term development for the area.

140 http://www.greenagenda.org/Rosiamontana/
In parallel with this alliance of forces questioning the corporate project, as presented in the previous chapters, the RMGC opened its office in the village spreading the word about the economic benefits of its gold-mine. Despite the positive public portrayal and the PR efforts of the corporation, signs of social discontent appeared rapidly. On 22 August 2002, 200 people started revolting to the lay-off news of 230 people assisting the archaeological excavations initiated by the corporation in Corna. They considered themselves betrayed by the promises of a project which was supposed to create jobs: “You lied to us so that we sell our homes to you” “Where are our promised jobs?” are few of the thoughts of the spontaneous outburst. It is important to mention that many of these demonstrators were people who already considered selling their properties (land and homes) to the corporation. This added to the strength of Alburnus Maior, the endeavor of which has started to attract supported from other actors.

Throughout the next eight years of activism against RMGC this campaigning took multiple various forms and was complemented with other campaigns (depending on the necessities and the

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chosen tactics) such as the ‘Cyanide-Free Romania’ Coalition (a national coalition of NGOs), ‘Hay-Fest’ (the first environmental festival in Romania) or other public debates, protests, petitions and court actions. In other words, the grassroots movement triggered mobilization in important cities of Romania (Bucharest, Alba, Cluj) and its main NGOs and well as participation of international organizations such as Greenpeace, MiningWatch, etc. As one can read on the website created by NGOs for this movement, the ‘Save Rosia Montana’ campaign is now a movement actively supported by approximately 40 Romanian NGOs, the Romanian Academy, universities, churches, and public personalities.  

Alliances and Stages

“In 1948, June 11 the communists nationalized and took our gold mine. First the ore is not the state’s ore (…) it is ours, it is of private people and it was stolen by the state and now they want to sell our ore to the foreigners.”

The state is silent…Thank God that He sent us people to help us! (anonymous local of Rosia Montana)

Within states, social movements often address their grievances to private groupings other than the state, their issues being outside of the macro-political official terrain and representing alternative discursive issues. This seems to be the case in Rosia too because of the variation and complexity of the ‘Save Rosia Montana’ campaign gathering support from many private (and public) institutions in the context of an elusive governmental commitment to addressing the controversy. While the focus on criticizing the state corrupt practices has been a crucial component of the campaigning for Rosia, activists have also targeted the corporation itself through a more inclusive critique of the ‘venture

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capitalists’ developing partnerships of business and public authorities on behalf of Capital interests disguised as citizens’ interests. A consistent part of the discursive struggle of activists has used the liberal democratic vocabulary focused on pushing the state (public officials) to respect the ‘rule of law’, property rights as well as represent and defend public goods and national interests.

Analyzing the case study of Rosia Montana one may theorize on how it reflects the corruption and democratic deficiencies that have marked post-communist ‘transition’ in general; as one activist said, “the plague of corruption has erupted in Rosia, as the cancer of this society”. Talking to important activists who opposed the Rosia Montana mining project (both Rosienii and other NGO activists) the general feedback I had was that the whole corporate activity looks like mockery to both the people and even the local government. As Ionut Apostol, activist within TERRA Mileniul III Foundation who, in 2002, has managed to gain the first grant in support for the Alburnus Maior declared:

This mining project is a derision for Romania; the whole country had to be tensioned and to struggle against this company and this phony project….so long the corruption persists, there cannot be sustainable development at the macro-level in Romania.

Trapped between what is perceived as a mafia tentacle State and a dubious business, the local opposition has asked for support that rapidly came from other national and international institutions: the Romanian Academy - the country’s highest scientific body – officially calls the Romanian authorities to halt the mining project, following its research conclusions in the fields of environment, geology, history, economy and archaeology. As the official statement of the Academy reveals, “the project is not a public utility and does not justify its negative externalities”145 In a press conference organized on 22nd of August 2008 in Bucharest, Nadia Mezincescu, Coordinator at the Romanian Academy in Bucharest talked that what is commonly called in the NGO world the paradox of Rosia

145 Ziua newspaper on line| Nr. 4717 – 19 December 2009.
Montana: despite being the oldest village of Romania, with historical and cultural heritages to be valued, the Romanian government preferred to sell it and thus, let it ‘die’:

How could a community exist for 2000 years and then gradually die in ten years? Something extremely wrong is happening in Rosia, a malefic synergy, a programmed and systematic crime to impoverish and kill a community!

An important step for this movement was Alburnus’ appeal to the Orthodox Church’s headquarters in Bucharest in November 2003, when around 250 people asked the Church to take an official position regarding Gabriel’s proposal. The result was that the Orthodox Church’s Highest Council released a powerful official statement against Gabriel’s proposal, referring to the non-vendible, non-marketable nature of Rosia’s sacred land. Invoking arguments about the divine character of the land, the Church reminds the public about the traditions of the Orthodoxy and the sacred and immobile character of the cemeteries and graves; it eventually rejects the corporate project believing that Rosia ‘must stay intact in its beauty, purity and sailntly’.

Moreover, the European Parliament has several times issued warnings about the project:

Caroline Jackson, President of the European Parliaments’ Commission for the Environment confirms that Rosia Montana is a serious problem concerning Romania’s EU accession. The EU Parliament has been monitoring the situation at Rosia Montana and sent two missions to Rosia Montana (in November 2002 and in October 2003). In January 31, 2005, the EP adopts a resolution on Romania's progress towards EU Accession. According to Art. 41, the parliament "expresses its deep concern about the long

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transitional periods agreed regarding the environment chapter, particularly as regards the Rosia Montana mine development, which poses a serious environmental threat to the whole region.\footnote{See Chronology www.Rosiamontana.org.} 

One can identify three main stages in the campaigning action to “Save Rosia Montana”: the protest stage, the Court stage and the ‘building alternatives’ stage. The first years of mobilization were primarily consisting of regular campaigns and protests meant to raise awareness on the adverse impact and problems associated with the proposed mining project as well as inform the public on the opposition forces gathered around Alburnus Major. For example in December 2002 – Greenpeace organized its first demonstration in Romania urging the government to pull the plug on Gabriel’s proposal and in September 2003 its activists from Hungary, Austria and Romania protested against the passivity of the Hungarian diplomacy regarding Gabriel’s proposal. Also in June 2003, members of Alburnus Maior together with Rosienii from the affected communities, i.e. around 200 people, gathered in the capital of Romania, Bucharest, to express their demands and vision regarding the sustainable development of their communities.

A similar action was also organized at the local level in September 2003 when approximately 500 Rosienii and other people from the surrounding areas gathered in the town called Cimpeni, close to Rosia Montana. Also, in October 2003 starts the first ‘Solidarity March for Rosia Montana’, which culminated with a public meeting in the old square of Rosia to declare solidarity for the Rosienii refusing to leave and opposition to Gabriel’s proposal. A second similar march is organized in August 2004. Inventive logos and messages have accompanied many of these protests, such as the one bellow conveying the idea that the corporation is buying the silence of many officials and individuals in order to reach their purpose of owing Rosia’s land and its gold.
“Silence is Gold” is one of the posters alluding to the corrupt practice of the corporation - buying the silence of elites.

As an international ecologist organization, Greenpeace had continuously supported the cause of Rosia, prompting positive but also negative reactions, contributing to the labeling of the local movement as a mere environmentalist movement. In June 2004 representatives of several Canadian NGOs such as Mining Watch, Halifax Initiative and international Greenpeace meet shareholders at Gabriel Resources' Annual General Shareholders' Meeting with a banner reading «Rosia Montana is Not for Sale.” Moreover, during July and August 3 2004, Greenpeace CEE organizes a ‘Save Rosia Montana’ info-tour in major towns of Romania to inform the population about Gabriel’s proposal and its true impact. A petition to the country’s Prime Minister Adrian Nastase against Gabriel’s proposal is signed by 270 000 people.
Another interesting form of event organized by the supporters of Alburnus Major is the 2004 ‘FanFest’, a green festival, the first in Romania, which was attended by around 4000 people from all over Romania and abroad. Similar festivals were repeated during the summers of 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2010. The 2010 HayFest mirrored the desired alternatives for the region: entitled “Rosia Montana, as a Big Stage”, it gathered people from all over Romania as well as other countries for workshops, political debates, traditional food-shops, eco-entertainment activities, touristic visits etc. In 2011, the same green festival is organized as an attraction for young ecologists interested in supporting the history, culture, nature and people of Rosia. ‘Now more than ever’ (a phrase of Romanian nationalistic echo) the volunteers’ effort is looked for in order to project the multiple possibilities to feel the pleasures Rosia can host: music, poetry, theater, sports, civic engagement, and generally a state of joy (voie buna): “Because if they (the corporation) pay for everything, we care for free!”148

Starting with 2004, Alburnus Maior and local leaders like Eugen David (as well as Stephanie Ruth and Stefania Simion who often live in Rosia) made a shift in the resistance tactics from protest to  

more punctual court actions. As Steph Roth declares, this shift was motivated by the fact that the
‘protests were not listened to’. All official decisions in favor of the corporate project - the
archaeological discharge certificate for Rosia Montana’s Carnic Massif released by The Ministry for
Culture in January, 2004, other environmental permits for drillings - were contested by Alburnus in
court and in most cases, the corporation lost.

Some of the most significant events of the “Save Rosia Montana” Campaign

- July 28 2002 - Endorsement of the ‘Rosia Montana Declaration’.
- October 2002 - The International Finance Corporation, the World Bank’s private lending arm, rejects Gabriel’s
  funding application quoting social and environmental concerns.
- January 15 2004 - The Ministry for Culture and the Cults releases an archaeological discharge certificate for Rosia
  Montana’s Carnic Massif. Alburnus Maior takes the ministry to court over this decision.
- March 28 2004 - The Environmental Protection Agency at Alba Iulia after receiving a warning by the Ministry
  for the Environment, who in return had been warned by Alburnus Maior, puts a halt to the EIA procedure for
  RMGC’s 2004 drilling campaign.
- June 28 2004 - Gabriel Resources takes Alburnus Maior to court over to cease www.Rosiamontana.org thus violating
  the APC Internet Rights Charter on: the right to communicate, the liberty of not being censored, the liberty to be
  involved in public protests and online debates.
- January 20 2005 - The Alba-Iulia Court of Appeal suspends the discharge certificate for the Carnic/Cirnic
  Massif. The decision was taken following a request an injunction submitted by Alburnus Maior’.
- Mach 5 2005 - Following the Espoo Convention stipulations, the Hungarian Ministry for the Environment and Water
  management submits 60 requirements to its Romanian counterpart as part of the EIA procedure for the Rosia
  Montana gold mining project; as proposed by Gabriel Resources.
- June 21 2005 - The Alba-Iulia Court of Appeal annuls the archaeological discharge certificate No. 4/2004 issued
  by the Ministry of Culture and Cults for the Carnic Massif, Rosia Montana.
- November 17 2005 - The Court of Appeal at Alba-Iulia suspends the environmental permit for 39 drilling points at
  Rosia Montana. The decision is the result of a legal action initiated by Alburnus Maior.
- 20 June 2007 - During the TV show ‘Intre bine si rau (Betwwen Good and Evil)’, Romanian Government for the
  first time admitted that the mine proposal at Rosia Montana it’s not in the public interest and as such no expropriation can
  place.
- 4 September 2007 - The Alba-Iulia Court of Appeal has suspended archaeological discharge certificate No.5/2004
  issued by Romania’s ministry for Culture and the Cults over the ‘Alburnus Maior – Rosia Montana’ site.
- 13 September 2007 – The licensing procedure for the Rosia Montana project is stopped for an unlimited period.
- 11 November 2007 – The Cluj Tribunal has taken the definitive decision to annul Urban Certificate No.
  78/ 26.04.2006 granted by the Alba County Council to Rosia Montana Gold Corporation (RMGC) to continue the
  Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedure.
- 23 January 2008 - Alba Iulia’s Court of Appeal declares that Rosia Montana’s Urban Plans are illegal.
‘Marcos’ of Transylvania?

The mine is a hole owned by a liar (Mark Twain)

A crucial moment is the summer of 2003 when the community movement receives a new important supporter: Stephanie Ruth. The controversial figure of this woman who has been living in Rosia for several years is an important topic of discussion. In April 2005, Stephanie Roth, won the prestigious international Goldman Environmental Prize - the world’s largest prize for grassroots environmentalists.¹⁴⁹

The quote above is the answer Stephanie Roth would give if asked about mining.¹⁵⁰ She was born in Switzerland, raised and educated in Germany and England. As a child she attended a Catholic school in Germany and later on she studied philosophy and international relations in England. After her father died she took care of her family business for a while (a small hotel) and then she moved to Nepal where she volunteered for the Chitwan National Park. She worked as an editor for the Ecologist and then she decided to get involved in controversies around the world fighting for ‘another world’ of less injustice. She first travelled to Romania in 2002 in order to help opponents of the Dracula Park in Sighisoara.¹⁵¹ Eventually, Stephanie became one of the major activists working more or less in the shadow of the Alburnus Maior local organization becoming the ‘global behind the local’ that often nurtured so much suspicion about the legitimacy and representativeness of the local opposition. She came to Rosia in 2002 and lived there and in Cluj (the close-by big city) in order to support the “Save

¹⁵¹ A successful grassroots movement to stop development of a so-called "Dracula Theme Park” in Transylvania, a project that would have destroyed an ancient oak forest reserve next to a medieval citadel.
Rosia Montana” campaign. Her connection to the global environmental movement is evident in her professional background.

The discussions we had gave me the impression that she believes in the critical role of social movements to challenge the power of the state, the multinationals and the international institutions and that, while she is very much aware of these efforts at a transnational level, she values grassroots local initiatives all the more. Steph developed a nice friendship with Eugen David, the President of Alburnus: David is the spokesman, making things clear about the position of Alburnus every time a public statement is needed while leaving Stephanie in the shadow. However, the discussions I had with both Steph and Eugen helped me see how much the two have been influencing each other over time in terms of language, perception and perspective on the controversy and its imbricate relations of power.

In the interview she agreed to offer me, Steph made a statement that resonated in my mind as a major connection with the ‘alter-globalization movement’: she said, ‘as long as we can encourage other values, another world is possible’. This alone may summarize the motivation for her persistent implication with the Rosia’s struggle; her dedication made many Rosienii trust and appreciate her.

Life is not only the environment…life is about social, culture… how we live our life… we hold values like Churches and cemeteries and cultural patrimony, people who have roots here…these are important values here; The drive of these values made us analyze closely the Gabriel Resources project, and because it is against these values, and because from a technical point of view, the project is extremely risky and destructive, we are against it; so our motivation are values that humankind has as a whole …this is the reason today we are called a civilization, paradoxically, yes, because we can think; these values make us act in certain ways. For some people, the only value is money, for other people there are other things; as long as we can encourage other values, another world is possible…

Besides familiarization with the everyday life in Rosia, Steph has created a website of the local organization in three languages (Romanian, English and Hungarian), found grants to continue the organization of protest and other legal actions meant to block the corporate project. Her networking
with global NGOs as well as national NGOs managed to create a transnational dimension of the local movement: the Rosienii and the Rosia Montana village were supported by Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, CEE Bank-Watch, Mining Watch, Earth Works, OSI, etc.

Talking to Steph I find out that the reason why she is fighting for the Rosia village is because it ‘has flowers and rivers and families and so much more. This is what we fight for. It’s about life, it’s about colors, it’s about people, it’s about rights and justice’ Stephanie recounts, several months after she came to Roşia Montana, how the Rosienii taught her the local history and how she understood that the way of life and history of the Moti\textsuperscript{152} made them ‘an integral part of their mountains’. Stephanie made a choice to oppose the corporate project altogether: her words can make us understand her determination in blocking the corporation from starting the exploitation:

\begin{quote}
What happens is a company goes to a place, slowly develops a project; they do it secretly, then the mining starts, you blow up the mountains and then problems start; but the company doesn’t care about
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{152} Traditional name of the local inhabitants in the region of the Apuseni Mountains in Transylvania.
the first mountain … the damage is already done and from a financial point of view the project already has a value and so you can’t go back…so you start to negotiate with the miners for better protection etc. but for them is cheap mitigation to give few more bucks or give something 2 % pay rise, they can still exploit, they have a project. Here in Rosia Montana they are not going to have it…..so this is why everybody is looking at Rosia because this would be one of the first time we could effectively stop a mine from happening.

In my interview with Steph I found out that the activist is very much cautious about the global corporate economy because it can actually harm local communities by homogenizing values and products; for her, ‘intelligent development’ would leave local ‘flavors’ alive and preserve the intrinsic value and worth of these. One of the things Steph admires about the people in Rosia is that they are ‘smecheri’, that is, astute: she believes that the perseverance and strength of the local opposition comes precisely from this genuine resistance to compromise crucial values. As she told me in the summer of 2008:

the campaign is extremely real and the ways people fight back are very intelligent; much more intelligent reactions from people than in other places certainly in England were they are becoming cynical; here people are quiet but perseverant…rebellious in the inside. In other places is just easy campaigns, fancy, winnable, staged, predictable, make compromises that you can’t win but here you really have a movement that is rising that I hope will remain and not be compromised.

Stories of ‘Success’

There is a prevailing feeling that without the NGO mobilization the local resistance, despite their organized opposition formalized through an association (Alburnus MAior) would not have had the strength to fight against the corporation. Consequently, the first and most relevant ‘success’ of the movement has been from the start its capacity to attract professional activists in support of their cause. Either presented as an environmental cause, a social or cultural cause or all together, the ‘strategic’ networking these activists created has managed to ‘create a name’ (or a ‘brand’ as some would say) that broadly represented the local landscape and its inhabitants, a name ‘worth’ fighting for.
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 Rosia Montana, Romania, and villagers in the Ahafo region of Ghana, who are being displaced from their homes to make way for large, industrial gold mines owned by Newmont and its partners.

The ‘success’ of the formal opposition continued with the halt of the loan that the Canadian corporation, Gabriel Resources requested from the World Bank in order to support its project (October, 2002). According to IFC officials 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.

One of the first NGOs finding ways to support Alburnus Maior was TERRA Mileniul III, a Bucharest-based NGO which managed to attract a special fund from the Green Grants Fund in order to equip Alburnus Major with the necessary logistics of an NGO (such as a fax machine). One activist explains how the local resistance movement has started to accomplish some of these basic goals:

Without NGOs mobilization and campaigning activities, the mining project would have probably been accepted. The first main success of our endeavor was to be able to obtain grants and support for the consolidation of Alburnus Maior as the local community grass-roots organization. Alburnus Maior by itself could not function as an NGO (and attract funds and support) or be able to start such a struggle against the corporation, given its lack of experience for such work. Consequently, the alliances that have been made between various foreign and national organizations have been crucial for the success of the local resistance. The second main success was to be able to convince the World Bank to withdraw its potential financial support for the corporate mining project.

One can argue that the ‘success’ consisted primarily in putting the Rosia controversy on the political agenda and raising awareness about its complex nature: this is the result of years of mobilization in protests and other visibility events. It is no surprise that the Rosia Montana became an iconic name for the way foreign investments have been made in Romania: the blockage of the corporate project has created a wave of discussions regarding the numerous privatizations that after

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1989 merely alienated lands, resources or factories, being sold ‘for nothing’ because they were not profitable enough while requiring state subsidies. Moreover, the high stakes Rosia Montana represented was due to the fact that 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.\(^{154}\)

This is how Alburnus describes its success in 2006:

Over the past 4 years multiple events occurred in aid of the Save Rosia Montana campaign. Many of these are remarkable and show the dynamism of the movement as well as the determination of Romania’s civil society to put a halt to this destructive development. The vibrancy of the campaign can be seen by the creative nature of the forces contributing. Whilst these come from all strands of life they also document the campaign’s groundedness. Whilst campaigning against this destructive development, ‘Save Rosia Montana’ is equally developing sustainable alternatives to mining for the region.\(^{155}\)

Once the protest stage achieved its objective, the leaders of the resistance switched to another tactic, less visible but of a greater impact in blocking the corporate advancement: that is starting with January 2004, Alburnus Maior began its strategy of suing the permits and authorizations needed for the RMGC project. By mid-2007, this strategic litigation began to show its fruits when courts commenced to pass judgment against the company. Stephanie was thrilled at the fact that despite corporate plans to produce the first ingot of gold in 2004, in 2007 their plans were suspended.

In addition, two private lodging houses were created in this time in Rosia for tourists while currently promoting Rosia as a site to be included in the UNESCO patrimony. This initiative appears as a powerful tactic to resist the corporate take-over of the land despite the pressures for ‘economic prosperity’ that the project would seemingly create. As Sergiu Nistor Secretary of the National

\(^{154}\) Larionescu et al. *Through the eyes of a Miner.*
Commission for UNESCO declared in March 2011, the corporate project asks Rosia Montana to forget about its history:

“people cannot be abandoned by the state (…) it is immoral that authorities left the Rosienii to confront the dilemma of having to choose between selling a patrimony and dying of starvation”

Thus, the “success” of this movement is in itself ambiguous if measured in terms of “old social movement” theories: i.e., a simple assumption that a movement’s success depends on a rational calculation of the best way to achieve a different distributive outcome from the political-economic arena is incomplete: minor forms of resistance should not be ignored merely because they do not achieve some sizable demands or structural changes. Thus, “new social movements” theories argue that by raising the status of cultural challenge, we increase sensitivity to the variety of beliefs, emotions, and values a movement may represent. Inspired by Meluchi, the dissertation understands movements as signs and symbolic challenges disturbing dominant cultural codes. Movements are ambiguously formed at the interaction of discourses and networks of people sharing and/or contesting culture. Eventually, as argued above, both success and failure are theoretical fictions.

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156 Sergiu Nistor: „We are asked to replace our history in Rosia” (La Rosia ni se cere să înlocuim istoria”), http://www.adevarul.ro/actualitate/Rosia_montana/La_Rosia_ni_se_cere_sa_inlocuim_istoria_0_443355972.html, accessed on 14.03.2011.
157 Escobar, Encountering Development.
Fragmentation in Movement

The first question of political philosophy today is not if or even why there will be resistance and rebellion, but rather how to determine the enemy against which to rebel.\textsuperscript{159}

‘Divide et impera’ (divide and conquer) has been the linguistic formula that many Rosienii used to characterize the corporate strategy in Rosia Montana. As one local describes the tensioned relations among people in Rosia, ‘they got to the point where they are ready to hurt each other. The one who works for the [company] is the enemy of the one who wants to stay; the latter is guilty that the former has no workplace’. Many Rosienii felt somehow trapped in the middle in this ‘war’ between the two formalized coalitions (of supporters and opponents and NGOs) rather uncomfortable to become a “cannon-fodder”. Some of them, strongly opposing the project have eventually become strong supporters of the corporation and sold their properties: Mr. Gheorghe Ivascanu is one famous example of this case: featured in the \textit{New Eldorado} movie as an extremely staunch opponent of the RMGC project: “we will never leave, only over our dead bodies!”, several years later, was featured in a RMGC ad touting the need to “get the gold out from these rocks”.

Alburnus Maior and its leaders Eugen David, Zeno Cornea, Calin Copros with the coordination of activists like Stefania Simion, Stephanie Roth, Sorana Olaru etc. seemed to clarify this ambivalence and instability of allegiance by ‘settling for less’, i.e., trusting a few but determined Rosienii that refuse to sell and proved their opposition over a long period of time. Despite the tension this attitude brought about - increasing feelings of suspicion with regard to more and more people, a pervasive atmosphere of distrust that could be felt by any tourist living there even for a shorter time, and eventually even

some residents felt that Alburnus does not answer their interests – leaders of Alburnus insisted to avoid making compromises.

During my research I observed the tensioned relations not only among Rosienii but also in the attitudes of NGO activists: I read both negative and positive feelings among the activists which in themselves tell us something about the complexity of the movement: disappointment, irritation, suspicion and lack of trust on all sides - the local leaders, the NGO leaders – as they were somehow starting to even suspect each other of collaboration with the ‘main enemy’, the corporation. There were NGO leaders who felt offended by some local leaders accusing them of suspicious behavior and, consequently, decided to get involved occasionally when they were asked for. There were organizations/artists/journalists and events that were ‘named and shamed’ for being sponsored by RMGC (including National Geographic, ‘Catavencu’ Academy).

After the initial protest stage of the ‘Save Rosia Montana’ campaign, various activists gradually withdraw from the public sight (while continuing debating the issue on private/environmental sites and email lists). I found out that this attitude was motivated by various reasons such as disappointment over the decision of many Rosienii to sell their land and properties to the corporation (as one activist told me ‘they were only waiting for money’), tired of the political hesitation and ambivalence, and the eventual ‘professionalization’ of the campaigning through court actions.

These internal quarrels could both be viewed as an obstacle in the way of coordinating the ‘strategic essentialism’ and as a refusal to unify the movement creating various nodal points from where resistance was emerging. It was not merely the local group that was building the resistance although the official representation and root-cause of resistance was located there in Rosia. Many other
environmental NGOs were contributing indirectly by organizing various local and national events in support of (or connected to) the Rosia case or by initiating projects to raise consciousness of environmental damage that this case, among others, could bring about.

One major reason of internal dispute (which for me put a light on the other more subtle internal quarrels among NGOs) has been revealed following the implication of the Soros Foundation starting with 2006: on the one hand, some leaders of Alburnus Maior (working closely with Stephanie Roth) believe that Soros is suspicious and potentially harming, both because of the business connections and through the Foundation’s projection of ‘false’ expectations for the Rosienii.

While Soros’s implication has been motivated by human-rights issues rather than ecology (and thus refusing to sign the ‘No cyanide’ petition of NGOs), the dilemma around Soros’s implication is not limited to the controversial reputation of Mr. George Soros himself but also pointing to a dispute over the tactics of resistance. As some activists mentioned, ‘Alburnus (and Steph) only want to monopolize the struggle…they don’t trust anyone anymore and wish to be the leaders and gain the recognition. We are only supposed to let them take the lead’.

Giving this constant search for the ‘real’ supporter, the ‘real’ enemy or the ‘real’ representative, people in Rosia were telling me how difficult it is for them to wake up each morning knowing that their life at home is under threat seeing the corporate offices in the center of their village. Thus, for many of them, the Soros initiative to open up an Information Center in the house of a local in Rosia, right across from the corporate office, has been symbolic and reassuring. After the inauguration, most of those Rosienii coming to the center-piazza each morning were now sitting at the Soros Center: their daily presence was, according to them, a sign of defiance to the corporation. They were happy knowing that the Soros Center is upsetting the corporation. As Morghi was saying, ‘they were dying of
spitefulness seeing how Soros inaugurated this Center where any opponent of the project can come and declare support to our cause”.

The Soros approach has been somewhat different than the approach of the leaders of Alburnus (though not contrary to the other villagers’ perspective who are members of Alburnus or just supporters): it has focused primarily on combating the State and the corruption of local authorities while trying to support the local community through different initiatives. These initiatives consisted of organization of seminars and debates among Rosienii, courses on agro-tourism, all meant to give the Rosienii more courage and optimism and convince them not to sell, as the project coordinator, Andreea Chifan says. Her opinions about the case within the context of Romanian post-communist state is that while in theory, the Constitution of Romania and the laws create the foundations for the ‘rule of law’ and democracy, in practice there is a totally different situation:

The role of the State varies from one epoch to another and from one society to another depending on their specific values. Liberal democracy means that the State should serve the individual, his /her liberties, freedoms, and the community as a whole. (...) The “idea” which is sold together with this gold mining project is, of course, that of prosperity. And RMGC touched here a very sensitive chord. So the RMGC argument is a simple one: here is a clear proposal in which Western interests coincide with the aspirations of the Romanian commoner.1 This is a win-win situation. And those who are opposed – are just a bunch of neo-religious fanatics, crypto-Stalinists like Green Peace and “alien from the middle class”. (...) Finally this is an issue which, in any democratic state, depends on the citizens, the civil society, a functioning and independent legal system and the departments of a freely elected government.160

Short time after Soros came at Rosia, it has started to be seen by important leaders of Alburnus as an outsider, with suspicion of having other intensions than ‘saving the community’. The climax and symbol of their ‘official’ or theoretical separation — was the removal of Zeno Cornea from the vice-president position of Alburnus, given his work for Soros’s center. I say ‘theoretical’ because in

practical issues, as for instance when there is a need to welcome tourists, the two parties are actually working together.

However, from the story of Zeno, we find out that his exclusion was also argued through a much earlier event (disconnected with the Soros arrival) when his position was different. When some of the leaders of Alburnus proposed to pressure for the stop of Minvest operations (after this state factory was bought by RMGC), Zeno argued:

I said what I also think now: how can we stop our Romanian people from having a job? Minvest were at that point working as a business to survive and not necessarily for Gold. They were assuring the normal extraction and combining minerals...of course, they did not own their own license to exploit because of Gold who took it and they were tolerated by Gold but they were our own fellows working there including my own daughter, earning their bread: what were we supposed to answer to the question: **Who is closing the mine? Alburnus Maior?**

Zeno became more and more involved with the Soros center and he was eventually hired by them as a collaborator for the services he was initially, merely informally, providing such as talking with visitors in Rosia and telling them about the controversy, maintaining the operations of the Center together with Sorin Jurca, the coordinator of the center (and the owner of the Center’s space). They are aware of the successes of Alburnus in the court, cancelling many of the legal decisions in favor of the corporate project but their dispute was also over the tactics of resistance. Zeno argued:

We cannot live only with the enthusiasm that the Gold (corporation) is losing! We have to make a living here and now, and under these conditions…**we have to learn to live with the Gold!**

On the other hand, an important leader of Alburnus, who did not agree for his name to be given out of ‘understandable mistrust’ towards all too many people interested to interview him, declares:

Alburnus asked for their (Soros) written collaboration, but they choose to work on their own. They did not join the “No Cyanide” campaign stupidly arguing that they are not environmentalists. What about
Human Rights in the Legislation

Alburnus wants an identity without confusion, without compromises, a serious and sincere struggle. I say: If I alone remain here, they have to respect all my rights... I take the risk. This is what I have done at Alburnus, even go with unpopular measures for the village to survive, even if I am cursed at... Too much involvement can actually harm the community.

Sorin and Zeno were intrigued by these attitudes and by what they saw as an extreme position. Sorin especially despised the language of ‘us versus them’ which was originally applied to the relation between ‘us’ (a unified opposition) and ‘they; (the corporation) started to be used within and among the leaders of the opposition itself: ‘now, Steph and Eugen come up with words like ‘us’ versus ‘them’.

The only difference between them and me is that they use these words while I don’t. What is going on?’, says Sorin. ‘Do we have more than one ‘Gold’ now?’ However, for some local leaders, Soros gradually started to be seen as the ‘second Gold’, an intruder who stayed as observer for so long and then came to ‘steal’ the grass-root local movement. Zeno also argues:

I have a different vision now I want to put something in place. I do not think that even if one person stays is ok, I want to encourage people to stay and not sell I want to give them a hope... I respect what others at Alburnus are doing but I want to have my own point of view...If I want to go to a class on tourism, I will go and I don’t care who is organizing the course, Soros or anybody else as long as I prepare myself for something... I am not ordered by anybody.

The dispute is interesting as it may be seen as a fight between modernism and traditionalism or between shallow and deep ecology. The dispute between these parties (Alburnus and Soros as the most recent) becomes a dispute over fundamental values for future life alternatives. On the one hand, people who are open to collaborate with Soros go to their courses to learn about agro-tourism; some perceive the Alburnus leaders as ‘extreme’, unrealistic, or ‘dirty and lazy’ because they do not come up with something constructive besides kicking the corporation, making public statements while the Rosienii are struggling to find work. As some lament:
They (the Alburnus leaders and Steph) do not like us with Soros but they use our stuff (house, food, people) to promote their fight; but what is happening with people in everyday life? They do not like Soros Romania but they take money from Soros Foundation - Hungary….it’s the same you know? This way they are seen as fake, hypocritical’

Visiting Rosia, one can easily observe that the Soros Center of Information is the main place where most Rosienii and visitors gather for drinks and discussions to share the latest news, to ask for help, to read the newspaper or the internet; by contrast, Alburnus’ office is somewhat a periodic summer house for visiting activists, not open to visitors. Soros came with proposals to teach Rosienii about agro-tourism and wishes to prepare the few people left in Rosia for future alternative occupations. Alburnus, however, is focusing on getting rid of the Gold Corporation; however, Alburnus also managed to support the development of the first pension in Rosia, inaugurated in August 2008 by a local named Andrei.

Some Rosienii say that Alburnus is wrong when perceiving Soros as another enemy. Others say that Soros is not credible when its representatives are driving Jeeps and lodging at pensions outside Rosia instead of living ‘like the Rosieni and with the Rosieni’. However, against this critique, sympathizers of Soros ask: ‘what about Steph? Isn’t she a foreign who owns a Jeep and who often lives outside Rosia, in Cluj or England?’ Surety Steph is considered more of a ‘representative’ given her ability to learn not only the Romanian language but the more ‘everyday’ language of Rosia’s life, spending lots of time with the Rosienii and living in a house in Rosia for more than five years. Soros itself has been criticized for functioning with a corporate mindset ‘invading’ the local community with expressed intentions to ‘upgrade’ the local labor force to modern market standards through professional NGO tools. If one looks more carefully, one can see that the communication between Alburnus and Soros, for instance, (though the same story seems to have been in the
collaboration between Alburnus and other NGOs such as TERRA Mileniul III) is fragmentary and marked by misunderstanding, refusal to openly discuss, quarrels. The selling of an overwhelming number of local properties to the corporation has been a major problem in the resistance process. This created the perception that the local movement is no longer local and that the activists are “alien” to Rosia and implicitly unrepresentative and even harmful for its interests.

Despite growing power for disavowing the privileged narrative (of the corporation), the quarrels within these groups of activists and Rosienii are essential for pointing out to the ambiguities of ideological allegiance and identity construction. These tensions may easily be credited to the (post)communist fragility of civil society and the high atomization of its representatives themselves. Pro or against attitudes towards any of the causes are not ideologically driven in any fixed way and solidarity as a signifier of common consciousness is unstable.

De-individualizing movements

There is no limit to the kind of framing conditions we wish to project for our interpretations, (…) Each interpretive frame is merely heuristic; it is invented in order to allow us to proceed with our forever provisional reading.\(^\text{161}\)

This chapters tried to point out the inner contradictions and tensions of the formal opposition movement developed around the Rosia Montana controversy in Romania. These can make us wonder about the limits of any ideological label one might use to describe such differend. One may argue that what ideological thinking involves is precisely a loss of meaning\(^\text{162}\) - for instance, supporters of the ‘liberal human rights’ argument versus the ‘ecological’ argument both seemingly ignoring that everyday life means putting food on the table. The concept of strategic essentialism is, therefore, useful.


\(^{162}\) Authors like Baudrillard or Geertz.
to understand the rather temporary, bottom-up choice to ‘lose’ some meanings in favor of immediate gains in terms of pragmatic and programmatic actions such as blocking a corporate project. Any system of meaning-making has its own delusions. Discourses, of any form, are viewed as arbitrary impositions of order on an otherwise disordered world. ‘Loss’ may be misleading – it is not so much that there was something of value that has been lost but that it was representation of another kind of value – value and meaning differ according to the context of discursive practice that are inscribed to. ‘Reification’ means not being able to see these two as arbitrary constructions.

The ambiguity of the movement in Rosia comes not only from the form of organization itself (a social movement is a rather fluid form of collective gathering, where individuals come and go) and from the activity of mining that has historically been ‘loved and hated’. The ambiguity of social movement organizations’ definition and boundaries also means that sympathizers (who are not necessarily members who are willing to put in time and effort working for the organization) would likely have subjective and often varying viewpoints on the meaning of the social movement, its goals and purposes. There is no unambiguous identity boundary-making from which to assure integration and consensus; singularities who find themselves in common cannot be confined within aggregated social identities; the receptivity is rather given to the multiple, dispersed, fragmented rather than coherent, linear, unitary. There are scenes and images I witnessed that undermine the verbalized self-understanding of the interlocutors, the stories they express and the stories they think they are in.

Social movements such as the one developed around the Rosia case might benefit more if promoting multiplicity (of sites and forms of resistance), differences, flows, mobility or nomadic thought and practice which is productive and diverse rather than monopolizing, centralizing or unifying. In other words, social movements should not act as organic groups of hierarchical leadership (as human communities have historically been imagined) but rather ‘de-individualize’; this does not
mean giving less importance to the individual, who is the product of power anyway, nor too much stress on an united group but rather displacement of power in diverse and multiple arrangements and combinations of power diffusion. Dominant discourses can be resisted not as liberation or emancipation (to an assumed different ‘essence’) but as ‘non-fascist’ way of life: action, thought and desire could be developed by proliferation, juxtaposition, disjunction and not by subdivision or hierarchy. Peasants and/or miners in Rosia Montana have had to break their habitual sense of self and life-style and reinvent themselves in multiple ways.

163 Foucault’s preface to Deleuze and Félix Guattari, _Anti-Oedipus: capitalism and schizophrenia_ (NY: Viking Press, 1977).
Chapter III

The Sacredness Narrative: A Nation between Poverty and Wealth

When I went to the monastery the priest asked me if I was from there. I nodded. He then asked me if I was aware that we would be damned should we decide to sell our land to the Stranger. Money does not bring you happiness. Those who left were not used to having that much money in their pockets. They bought all sorts of things, like cars. I even knew of someone who had spent it all in a couple of months. It’s better to have it the way God gave it, with measure. The way it has been until now, the way we were taught.\textsuperscript{165}

Certainly the desire for riches is nothing new, the passion for gold has nothing specifically modern about it. What is new is the subordination of all other values to this one…Money is not only the universal equivalent of all material values, but also the possibility of acquiring all spiritual values.\textsuperscript{166}

\textsuperscript{164} Demonstration in front of the Ministry of Culture, Bucharest, for the inclusion of Rosia Montana in the UNESCO World Heritage, January, 20, 2011.
\textsuperscript{165} Szombati, The spell of Gold: Affective politics and the will to hegemony in a Transylvanian mining community.” Master’s thesis submitted to Darwin College.
Narratives of Ontological Security

As Verdery’s studies in Transylvania have shown, the symbols of tradition, faith and the nation continue to have an appeal especially amongst the rural population. It is no surprise that the sign of the ‘community in peril’ strongly resonated in the minds of proud descendents of Rosia Montana’s old families who are ‘called upon’ by the ancestors [stramosi] to protect the land from strangers. This chapter will address a very common theme in the Rosia Montana’s differend: the ‘desire’ for ontological and epistemic transcendental certitudes or securities such as God, Spirits, Souls, Nation, Home, Nature (Mountains). All these are interlinked through the ‘invisible’ force of the sacredness narrative: according to the Rosienii, there are certain things which are not ‘for sale’ because they have a divine nature behind human power of understanding. The symbols we are addressing here contrast with the certitudes promoted by the new narratives of modern and Western progress and rationality represented in the corporation’s discourse.

According to the Rosienii, the protection of traditional, cultural, historical and religious symbols is a duty for the ‘real’ Christian and the ‘real’ Rosian; this duty is revealed in all ancient stories or legends and in all ‘invisible’ signs nature sends – for example, the fact that the name of the President of Alburnus is ‘David’ resonates as a supra-natural sign that made Rosienii compare their struggle with the biblical tale of ‘David and Goliath’; the fact that few Rosienii who sold their properties have committed suicide or are under severe anguish is due to the ‘curse’ of the mine, a creation of God; sent by God, the ‘valve’ (ghosts of the mine) punish those who want to take more than they deserve. All historical figures (Horea, Closca, Crisan),

representing (subaltern) heroes of the Moti - people in the Apuseni Mountains of Transylvania, famous for their strong mentality as people who defend their freedom - are invoked as signs of resistance and power against violence. Nowadays, repeating lessons of history, Rosienii make reference to these symbols in order to motivate, strengthen and justify their defense against a new form of violence, i.e. the global market force constituted by the corporation and its supporters.

These symbols are a constitutive part of the life and the identity of Rosienii while their persistence disturbs modernist symbols of life and progress. When we speak of modernity we have in mind the way of life or modern societies in Western Europe starting with the 15th century connected with emergence of the nation-state, industrialism and capitalism, private property, secularism, bureaucracy individualism. The individual come to be seen as a rational agent of change and main engine of social progress. Humans were no longer perceived as prisoners of customs, traditions or superstitions but they supposedly started ‘thinking’ for themselves, breaking up with the medieval social economic and religious orders. Rosia Montana is a place that, like other (rural) areas of Romania, preserved the knowledge of centuries (traditional, spiritual, religious) despite attempts to discredit them as backwards coming from forces promoting industrialization. Therefore, we often hear complaints about the invasiveness the corporation now brings in terms of unprecedented scope and depth of disrupting violence for the life-worlds of Rosienii.

The supposedly scientific-neutral focus evoked in the modern corporate narratives has meant a derision and marginalization of spiritual and religious perspectives; it also meant a more individualistic and materialistic view on what achievement meant with less emphasize on inheritance (of family, ancestry or other origin). The ideal is again, in modernist fashion, to
improve the world and the Man using science, spreading civilized, productive, technical, commercial, and consumerist behavior. In this yet another modern crusade, it has been somehow forgotten that there are contending understandings of self and multiple perspectives over knowledge and ‘the best life’. Scientific (economic/juridical) justifications made the mining project look like an enormous machine whose task was to rebuild/reconstruct (rather than decipher) the village and the surrounding mountains/nature.

Modern transformations continuing today under the global developmental process inevitably bring about a marginalization of other forms of knowledge and being: control of nature and of subaltern classes. These practices are taken for granted as rational while the institutions of the state are programmed to manage and discipline the modern man into these values of life. Once solutions as patterns have been envisaged, a debate over the patterns of development was handicapped; technology and science was to have the ‘right’ answers. The ‘emotional’ (in a pejorative tone) approaches of the Rosienii were to be changed by the corporation.

As in many other places on the planet, transfer of technology has been a sine qua non for any development project, at the expense of native knowledge: all local principles and rules of life in Rosia Montana appalled the management team of the corporation, that blamed the NGOs for stirring such emotional (read, hilarious) views only for their own purpose. These struggles are a reminder of what already happened in Latin America, for instance, where development became a force so destructive to ‘Third World’ cultures, ironically in the name of people’s interests.

The most important exclusion, however, was and continues to be what development was supposed to be all about: people. Development was-and continues to be for the most part- a top-down, ethnocentric and technocratic approach which treated people and culture as abstract

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concepts, statistical figures to be moved up and down in the charts of ‘progress’ development was conceived not as a cultural process (culture was a residual variable, to disappear with the advance of modernization) but instead as a system of more or less universally applicable technical interventions intended to deliver some ‘badly needed’ goods to a target population.”169

One could, however, argue that the communist experience offered a different story to the modernization of Eastern Europe. The similarities and differences between communism and capitalism in terms of modernization would constitute a long case for discussion. We are going to refer to some of these in the final chapter of this dissertation. However, it is important to observe, as Rosienii do, that the communist regime could not and did not intend to annihilate the village entirely despite some impositions for displacement and despite authoritarian decisions regarding their possessions. As some Rosienii comment:

This gold has been both our bless and our curse. Ceausescu himself could not dare to do what this corporation wants. Ceausescu displaced around 11 families in the 1970, destroyed the Dacic fortress and many houses are now made out of its stones, but he did not dare to go further. Here, gold is under our village.

What Rosienii seem to point out is that there is violence among violence; the current corporate violence is viewed as more criminal than the communist one, given the indifference with regard to (the collective) community. Therefore, a widespread opinion among Rosienii is that life under the communist regime was safer and much more peaceful than nowadays. It may be the case that the national-socialist doctrine of the Ceausescu regime still resonates within the hearts of the Rosienii with ideals of patriotism and nation-building, ideals that nowadays seem anachronistic and dangerous in the face of global market expansion.

The ancestral memory of these people tells them that gold is their possession. The Romanian reality of the twenty-first century contradicts them: gold is the property of the State. This is something the Moti could never understand. 50 years of communism could not prove this. A certain beautiful but tragic stubbornness makes them walk this way without return. Its the same

169 Escobar, *Encountering Development*, p. 44.
stubburness of Horea, Closca si Crisan, or of Avram Iancu, or Balint. They were all Moti and they were all heroes that tragically died because they could not give up their truth.\footnote{Horia Turcanu, “Motii, pe picior de razboi (Motii, on the verge of war), Formula As, No. 501, 10.02.2002, http://www.formula-as.ro/articol.php?nrrev=501&idart=2997&numecap=Societate&cc=Rosia%20Montana, accessed on 10.10.2007.}

This chapter will be about this ‘truth’ of ancient and spiritual origin, that partly constructs both the identity and the resistance discourse of the Rosienii against the corporate presence. First, we will look at the stories Rosienii tell about their ‘homes’ as being ‘inappropriately’ considered for ‘sale’; second, we will look at the spirits and the religious influences; third, we will analyze the perspective on poverty and richness that Rosienii offer in contrast with the corporate outlook. All these accounts will further draw the landscape of power and resistance brought about by the differend in Rosia Montana.

### Parents’ Home is Not for Sale

Dealing with strangers might provide contexts to the commoditization of things that are otherwise protected from commoditization.\footnote{A. Appadurai (ed.), The social life of things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1986), p. 15.}

One of the most frequent phrases in the Rosia’s conflict is a strong Romanian belief that “the parents’ home is not for sale”. For many corporate supporters this belief sounds archaic and hilarious mirroring incapacity to adapt to the mobility of capital economy. But ‘home’ has a special meaning for the Moti. Petru Davian is 61 years old who decided to live away from his family (living in a village close to Rosia) and come back to his parents’ home in Rosia Montana. For him, this return symbolized a return to a meaningful life. However, his surprise was that he could not enjoy a peaceful life because of the corporation’s presence. He has opposed the
corporate project from the beginning and considers himself to be an active citizen in the village, participating in all the events of the local opposition. Petru told me his feelings about the situation and explained to me his motivation for not selling his land; as in other testimonies, we find out that selling of a home and of a community of ancestral spiritual bonding is “inappropriate”:

It is not appropriate to sell the parent home; then it is not appropriate to sell and destroy churches and cemeteries because these are fundamental for life; and then comes the environment and our nature...

It is a psychological war...we are stressed all day by this company...it is hard to watch them around here every morning. It was better before the revolution, more peaceful. We have been stressed in the last 13 years...our whole life is all too nerve-racking ever since the company has come here...

What is here taken to be ‘natural’, ‘normal’, ‘moral/right’ fundamentally differs from what we saw in the previous chapter that the corporate mindset is promoting. As we shall see in this chapter as well as the next one is that, what is conveyed is a special perspective on the nature of the distribution of social goods, the rules/norms/mental models of socially acceptable behaviour in the specific role of Rosian. Discursive practices involve ways of being in the world that signify specific and recognizable social identities: Rosienii throughout centuries have learned to “be” miners, Rosieni, Romanians, Moti, Christians. While for the corporate advocates it is “normal” and “good” to make money by exploiting the gold, for some local people the standard of normalcy requires certain limits that refer to respect for the dead ancestors that are buried where the gold is to be exploited.

The ‘roots’ of an unseen nature that are connected to ‘home’: the important Romanian ritual of burying and mourning has also been under threat in the eyes of the Rosienii. Many personal stories I recorded refer to the symbolic meaning of graves, cemeteries and dead
relatives. It is considered “sinful” and “inhumane” to allow unburying of ancestors (families) that would entail as a result of the destruction of cemeteries and churches. Disrespect for roots and parents would bring shame and anxiety for those people whose meaning of life is strongly connected to God and family. As Cosma, a local man from Rosia was telling me: How can we accept to cover our ancestors’ graves with industrial waste? How can we accept to cover with waste our parents, grandparents, sisters and relatives?

Morghi is one of the local women who repeatedly opposed the idea that bones and cemeteries can be removed as mere objects. Her whole family died: her young son, her parents, her six brothers and her husband. Morghi is in her sixties, born and raised in Rosia Montana. She openly admits, as many other of my interlocutors, that her life during communism has been rather peaceful: though there were not enough products to buy, one had the financial possibility to „buy a chunk of calf” which was sufficient for one month. Now she thinks that money has no value anymore and that after the revolution she experienced hunger given the debts she had to pay for her apartment where she was living. Morghi admits that right after the corporation came in Rosia she worked for one of the corporate representative’s family with housework. However, after she found out about the intention of the Gabriel Resources, she asked that person: "what would you say if I settle to Australia, give you some money to leave your home so I can make a huge hole in it instead? Well, no, you see…I don’t let myself be taken out of my home either."

Her daily visits to the grave of her relatives and her fierce participation in demonstrations made her famous in the village: "how would I unbury my child and see how he is...it is unbearable, I cannot even think about this". She admits feeling unhappy and unhealthy. Now retired, she still works helping other families with housework in order to make a living as she has no family and no other support. When she was finally starting to recover from the grief of losing
her family, the Gold Corporation came and added to her anguish. She often experiences sensations of vomit at the site of corporate presence each morning.

She became and remained one of the Alburnus Maior members and openly opposed the corporate project: “I oppose even during my sleep”, she says smiling. For her, the main problem of Rosia is the presence of Gold because it closes other possibilities for flourishing such as tourism or local manufacturing business. She is not against investments per se but she thinks this particular project is „a lie and has no meaning”.

All people who are contesting the corporate mining project are proud individuals whose spiritual needs are being offended by the mere appeal to their material needs which seemingly can be satisfied by the corporate offers. ” We don’t want to sell our home… this home is over 100 years old…I cannot have somewhere else what I have here…” says Sechei Zeno, a local from Rosia.

As elsewhere, developmentalism and its promoters attempting to secure discursive and imaginative monopoly through production of knowledge; the most common signifiers in the developmentalism are stereotypes such as poverty, famine, misery and illiteracy. But Rosienii defend their status as agents of cultural and historical value being proud of their possessions, their land, crops and animals. They express their deep connection with this nature’s and God’s universe. Lucretia, one of my hosts in Rosia, talks with great love about her family and does not feel poor just because they do not have enough money; she rather seemed frustrated because of the present societal neglect of their possessions as being outside of what ‘wealth’ is, stripping the whole village of any other worth but the ‘gold-shine’. She used to say that ‘she has all she needs
in Rosia” and could not understand why the value of her life-style is shamed as ‘poor’ and ‘backward’.

Again, under conditions of developmentalism, value as a coherent concept is problematic. Why should home be transformed into object for sale? And how is „home” to be defined anyway? As Appadurai argues, not every act of commodity exchange is done in a context of shared cultural assumptions; thus, value as a coherent concept is doubtful. Economic transactions with homes and land in Rosia Montana are hardly seen as legitimate as they were operated without mutual agreement upon standards and criteria and under conditions of hardship where choice is rather non-authentic.

The portrayal of Rosia Montana as essentially a ‘poor region’ became a discourse to justify the corporate mining project as the “only solution.” Sad at this awareness, Lucretia used to say to me that ‘we, people, should be born elderly, to be wise enough and capable to decide freely our fate in the world”. The wisdom Lucretia, among other Rosienii, is talking about, is a wisdom of the historical past times inherited from grandparents and legends that spirit up the homes of the Moti in Transylvania. Along with these beliefs and moral concerns, there are also the legends and the creeds of the miners and of the ‘iobagi’ (slaves) in the Apuseni Mountains the suffering of whom is inspiring stories of national history. This will be detailed below.
Motii: Spirits of Historical Knowledge

Culture is to be read because it can be regarded more as a semiological system rather than an efficient, goal-oriented, need-fulfilling system.\(^{172}\)

It is enough to listen to the whisper of old walls, the sounds of broken mountains, the vague scream of ceramics everywhere; it is enough to breathe deeply and pay attention to the birds screaming to understand in one second the history of these places. It is a history of gold and suffering, of wealth and crime, of immortal heroes, of deceit, refugee and blood.\(^{173}\)

I usually referred to the inhabitants of Rosia Montana as Rosienii; however, many times they use the word ‘Moti’ to point out their connection to the ancestors of Transylvania, heroic peasants in the mythical history of Romanians: the life of people like Horea, Closca and Crisan illustrates the Romanian story of nation-killing, subaltern servants (iobagi) who were slaughtered by the ruling classes during medieval times.

For many Rosienii and other people, what is at stake in the Rosia’s differend is life (as existence within a historical aboriginal territory) itself: the corporate mining project means the removal of a village, a community with homes and values surrounded by nature of miraculous beauty: “The village will be removed together with all its history and its churches, to leave room for a place that could not be inhabited”\(^{174}\). Faced with this threat, local people often hope that if the State does not protect them, maybe the divine force of historical and religious nature will: “They believe in some Zalmoxis of justice who will stop the horrible crime against the history, the nature and the people of these places.”\(^{175}\)

The history and the religious signs that are invoked for the protection of Rosia Montana in the face of potential extinction are part of national myths which shape the identities of Moti as

\(^{172}\) Shapiro *The Politics of Representation*, p. 16.


well as of Romanians. Romania, like all nations instrumentally privilege certain narratives that benefit various forces in a particular historical time and space. Narratives are always (re)constructed and promoted with a particular purpose while their presupposed impartiality is a cultural, institutional and political effort towards legitimacy: “After all, it is not symbolic geography that creates politics, but rather the reverse.”176

The reasons why historical and religious myths are essential here is because their implications extend beyond the level of formal institutions; they shape identities and social relations. From this perspective, nationalism (socialist or/and religious) is more than merely an ideology employed by the politicians for some specific purpose. The culturalist approach to nationalism177 opens the door to a broader understanding of nationalism as a pervasive discourse about the nature of society and of the individual. It is a way of thinking which prompts us to evaluate and make sense of our social world, a discourse connecting personal identities, social relations, political forms of organization and wider worldviews. The emotional identification people feel toward the nation stems from its secular 'sacredness', providing people with the feeling that they are part of a 'family'.178 Nationalism draws the boundaries of our 'safe' spaces: spaces of security and of trust, core emotional dimensions of human life.

It would not be the first time that national narratives are praised for their emancipatory/empowering potential: in the context of anti-colonial struggles or in the case of reactions against globalization, nationalism can be a mobilizing force or a source of resistance.179 God, spirits and nature are part of this national narrative that supports the opposition movement. Rosienii

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177 Proposed by Benedict Anderson in *The Imagined Community*, (London: Verso, 1983)
historicize their relation to their reality and place their identification with and subjection to the nation and the sacred into the context of major events of domination such as the Roman, the Austro-Hungarian and the communist, the violence of which is, for them, lesser, allowing land to be preserved:

“This is the inheritance God gave Rosia Montana more than three thousand years ago! Not like this guy Timis who thinks he can finish with it in fifteen years, take the ore, exterminate us from the face of the earth and then leave quietly back home with our gold. Such a bad vision could not even be shared by Domitian who filled the Roman treasury with Rosia’s gold, or by Maria Tereza’s Austro-Hungarians and not even by Ceausescu.”

The Gold of the Apuseni Mountains that saved the Romans from ruin during Traian, is an element gathering a lot of the national mythical imagination of Rosienii. The fact that various Rosienii who sold their properties to the corporation have committed suicide or are under severe anguish has been another confirmation of its ‘curse’: the mine that is a creation of God and those too greedy in exploiting it, will be punished. Sent by God, the ‘valve’ (ghosts of the mine) punish those who want to take more than deserve, those who do not leave gold for the others to make a living too. The greedy, the dishonest, the corrupt and the liar cannot remain without punish from God: only these individuals are cursed to become insane because of gold.

These elements of local knowledge are, for many people in Rosia Montana, part of a non-modern intuitional form of knowledge. Supra-natural forces, miner’ beliefs and religious habits prevail in everyday life: “never take more than the mine is offering you! Otherwise it can kill you!” The ghosts of the mine can be heard only by those who are afraid of God, who understand that there are limits to what can be ‘eaten’ out of the mountain: these ‘valve’ (spirits) appear to

the hard-working miner at night after hours of hard work and when the man’s physical force
decreases and reminds him about rest and gratitude. One miner tells about his meeting with the
mine’s ‘valva’ (ghost):

One day in the afternoon I was up here in Cavnic in a site that was not mined by anyone else
before. Everything around was eaten up by older miners. As I was walking around eleven thirty in
the afternoon, I overheard someone in the ground charring the stones with the chisel. I swear
there was someone mining where there were no galleries! An old man told me that what I heard
was the greatest ghost of all the mines. He told me that the site was not for this generation to be
mined but for the future ones, one hundred or two hundred years from now. God prepares
everything for each as needed and for all centuries to come. All is ordered by God.\textsuperscript{181}

This rhetoric of morality of the ‘good’ miner clashes the amorality of the economic
temptations which invites entrepreneurs to employ the most modern and advanced technologies
in order to extract the last piece of gold out of the mountains. But according to the local legends,
gold and its home ‘the mountain’ is not the property of humans and cannot be abused as such
without consideration for God and future generations.

The bliss of gold has been the reverse of a curse of being “hunted” by spirits, enemies,
outsiders. These supra-natural or divine explanations often appear in the everyday stories and
conversations with the people in Rosia. Potential threats are reacted against with an attitude of
mysterious mysticism as Zeno Cornea told me, ‘Our gold is protected by God: He does not let
anyone take more than He wants!

In their struggle to protect homes and values, the myths, legends and spirits of local and
national relevance are strategically and instrumentally invoked. Rosienii also consider that the
success of their movement has been a sign of the rightfulness and truthfulness of their cause and

\textsuperscript{181} Turcanu, “The Revenge of the Mine’s Ghosts”.
beliefs: God helped them by sending them the “right” people to support the struggle for the preservation of a national and a spiritual space of value.

We thank God that He sends us people to help us. The Minister of environment, God give him health and take care of him because he thinks of us...or Formulas AS and Alburnus. From the beginning I have been a member of Alburnus Maior, participated in their meetings and events. Good Lord sent us Franquoise and then Stephanie Roth; with whom we had a blessed collaboration! Everywhere we go we follow them blindly... and the lawyers working free of charge for Alburnus and Rosia...to show Romania that there are still patriots around her... so we have faith!

The opposition movement in Rosia Montana has often borrowed motives of nationalist and religious nature to constitute a case for the protection of local values as a duty for the ‘real’ Christian or the ‘real’ Rosian. Despite ‘primordia’ being a product of invented tradition, it may be viewed as a sign of conscious cultural resistance to global capital economy. The question of the strategic usefulness of patriotic and nationalist discourses remains problematic but it does prompt the researcher to consider both the emotional aspect and the contexts within which it may be employed.

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‘Why don’t you give the poor what they deserve?’

Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas.183

They do not care about homes…They need our land! (anonymous local from Rosia)

Since the Cold War started, the First World has been waging a preventive war against poverty; and fighting poverty meant creating ‘underdevelopment’ as a concept to be operationalized.184 The signifiers have become fixed and difficult to deconstruct within the prevailing discourse of economics. A similar context is to be noticed in Rosia Montana too: the mine has been in decline after the communist collapse and the EU accession made state subsidies to mining impossible. Moreover, declaring the region ‘mono-industrial’, depopulation was a matter of time.

As in other parts of the ‘developing world’, poverty has been merged into the ‘necessary other’ narrative for the developmental politics to be implemented. Communism has been the easy-target to blame for poverty despite the well-known public perception regarding the relative well-being of many Rosienii during communist times; there is, however, silence with respect to the contribution of capitalism itself to systemic pauperization and to the connection between market mechanisms, the destruction of communities and the rupture of social relations. The situation is similar to that described by Escobar in Latin America:

Massive poverty in the modern sense appeared only when the spread of the market economy broke down community ties and deprived millions of people from access to land water and other resources. With the consolidation of capitalism, systemic pauperization became inevitable.185

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184 Escobar, Encountering Development, p. 5.
185 Escobar, Encountering Development, p. 22.
Of course, the financial relocation packages offered by the RMGC to the Rosienii who agreed to sell will play an important role for future social security, especially for the elderly people. However, there are cases where the ‘consumption packages’ acquired by the relocated already constitute ‘investments’ endangering future security: buying cars and other items, inhabiting a new apartment building with higher maintenance bills and being young or middle-aged unemployed with unqualified labor skills makes future on the capital economy look daunting.

One of my interlocutor in Rosia referred to the discursive construction of poverty as an identity relation and implicitly to the global economic connections between local displacement and migration flows from Eastern Europe to the West. His words are not to praise the cherished “freedom of movement” in a liberal fashion but rather to reveal the structural inequalities that linger in this “exchange”: Romanians end up like “homeless dogs” in this flow of seemingly exchangeable interests, in a journey they are often forced to make to the (un)hospitable space of the West.

The story of the local man makes a clear-cut connection between deprivation (past communist and present capitalist) as the root-cause of people’s poverty; it is a story about the global implications of this home-property deprivation. This is important in the context of widespread demonization of Romanian immigrants. The condition of deterritorialization and redefinition of geopolitics in terms of networks and webs is an ambiguous celebration given the tensions always occurring in the so-called ‘freedom of the movement of people’.

The controversy he prompts me to is also the one about private versus public use of the “commons”, where private does not only mean corporate while the public does not equal state monopoly. The local opponents also demand for their private use of their land in the liberal
fashion of self-enterprise while welcoming public and private projects for the valorization of the
(agro-eco-) touristic potential of the region. According to my interlocutor, before communism
Motii had their private means and rights to find gold as well; when one family used to own a
small part of the underground mine (the so-called cuxe), parents did not have to worry about
making a dowry for their daughter. This is in itself a critique of the damaging effects of
industrialization (both communist and capitalist) on the livelihood of people.

If we think of ‘cuxe’, the underground properties of people: so many others received their
properties after the revolution, even the king. What about our cuxe? People have
documents to prove they own these…why the underground wealth has to be owned by the
state? Before, those who owned 2-3 cuxe had no worries about dowry to his daughter!
…Rather than making people migrate nowhere in Spain as dogs in the streets! Even during
Ceausescu they let them use the ‘cuxe’; they took gold and sold it, because they could find
gold everywhere and they make good money. **Why don’t you give the poor what they
deserve?**

His speech is a reminder of the widespread discussion about the ‘tragedy of the
commons’, i.e. the privatization of public spaces within the framework of neo-liberal global
politics actually continues the tragedy of the ‘collective’ monopoly of the state during
communism. Both the macro-‘tragedy of the commons” and the micro-tragedy of having to
transform singular/non-exchangeable things into commodities are revealed at Rosia Montana.

It represents one of the moments when morality is evoked in relation to economic life and
one can observe which actors are invited to participate in the discursive exchanges. In this new
“moral economy” of post-communist Romania, where the rules of the game escape a clear center
of decision-making, decision-making itself becomes difficult perpetuating the blockage and
depopulation. Rosienii may be seen as refugees forced to sell their homes because of tragic
events that made their life in Rosia Montana impossible and uncertain. In the moral economy of
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an emerging market such as Romania, uncertainty itself has been an ‘asset’ both as a macro-political feature as well as a micro-political stance. As Sankaran Krishna argues about ‘emerging markets’:

> It is a truism that emerging markets lack strong and well established state and financial institutions, transparency, layers of impartial and incorruptible bureaucratic insulation between state elites and economic institutions, clear guidelines regarding banking regulations, areas earmarked for investment and the movement of capital (…) *it is precisely such characteristics that make them ‘emerging markets’ in the first place and offer the opportunities for super-profits to Western hedge-fund managers, investment banks and individual investors.*

In this context, for my interlocutor, the liberal freedom landscape seems more an imposition of (un)freedom with undesirable consequences on the long run for both identity and home. Corporate discourse often relies on the assumption that the vulnerable Rosienii want to be “rescued” and that the jobs they might be able to create locally (whether sweatshops or mere temporary jobs of low standards) are a bliss they have the privilege to offer. Surely the vulnerable also internalize this discourse as presented in the media and through all channels of socialization. As Shapiro argued in making an interpretation of the “Dirty Pretty Things” movie, the vulnerable sometimes end up selling their organs in order to make a living. Surely they want to sell what the political economy asks them to sell as their own valuable commodity (a body and labor force). But surely they may see no other choice. However, these “organs are harvested under severe duress.” In this vein, exchange transactions in Rosia are hardly to be seen as legitimate and authentic.

My interlocutor preferred to stay anonymous while acknowledging his status as a former doctor of the village, a well-regarded status/position that however did not receive a financial recognition from the state. He was admitting his desires to travel and see the world, a dream that

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he would never fulfill (even if he sells his properties to the corporation). He asked me to go for a walk while taking the interview, showing me around the forest on his way to a church. I realized that there is more to his resistance discourse than language: while his words were forceful and confident in accusing the corporation and the state, his pleasure to walk around the forest and inhale the fresh air was inspiring. Each day of religious celebration, he walks the road to the church and enjoys the forest and the mountain. He wonders about the state indifference to the natural surroundings especially in the context of growing environmental consciousness:

The conversation with him prompted me to the corporate discourse depicting the Rosienii as ‘uneducated’, a ‘Balkanist treatment’ subtly disrespecting and patronizing, claiming it knows better what the village needs. As Ranciere would say, we witness the same war between rich and poor that constitutes the very existence of politics. But while the ‘orders’ are given by the rich,
the poor obey precisely because they are equal with the ‘rich’.\textsuperscript{189} The arrogance of corporate conduct is, however, unable to allow the listening of the ‘poor’ as equals not only in dignity as humans but in imagination (of the world to live in).

With the money from a house with seven rooms some just managed to buy an apartment with two rooms in the city….and the corporations was saying: well, you are a peasant, why are you so demanding? As if we are mentally retarded because we are from the mountains here and we do not know life and we do not think: ‘We will tell you what to do, we know better’, was the corporation saying to them.

For the local people there is wealth in the mountain and it is not merely gold: it is the voice of the mountain and of the nature around that talks to them with meaningful language that gives sense to their life. Lucretia offered me a poem which I read as a story of meaningful belonging to the nature surrounding the village.

\begin{quote}
\texttt{Ours are these mountains\\Stone-like, fertile and gray\\And we hikes them to the sky,\\We opened their stomach…\\Of gold and iron,\\And we suffered together on rain and snow\\We opened their giant pelvis,\\We sang their beauty,\\We know their souls and storms,\\Better than anyone…}
\end{quote}

As Lucretia’s poem tells us, there is a sense of belonging to the mountains surrounding their village. This feeling of belonging completed by a historical relationship with the mountains which in return, belong to them, was a way to declare their resistance to the corporate project that seemed to defy and disrespect this ancestral connection. Using the word „fertile” to describe the mountains counter-acts the corporate supporters’ discourse of „poverty” - the Rosia village in

\textsuperscript{189} Jacques Ranciere, \textit{Dis-agreement, Politics and Philosophy} (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p.16
Lucretia’s eyes is not a poor village because it managed to create a home for thousands of people for thousands of years. The exploitation of the metals (minerals) found in the mountains was moderate, gradual and beneficial to the Rosienii. But the mountain was not a mere object of exploitation: it has a soul and a spiritual value; it should be admired, sang and loved.

Placed into the Romanian national milieu, the discursive construction of poverty becomes a relational problem, related to historical struggles and nation-building as well as to nature (mountains as protectors) and supra-natural and divine interventions. For instance, it is interesting to see how poverty and development in the Moti’s Land is approached in 1946 by Geo Gogza, a national writer famous for his interest in this area, making appeal to the ancestral bond of these people with the mountains. The mountain and the land as parts of nature have much more of a profound connection to the destiny and life of the Moti. “There are two things precious in the Apuseni Mountains: people and gold. (…) Only in the Apuseni Mountains people are tied till death to the barren stone: villages that grew on the dry surface of granite sheathed in gold.”

The history of Apuseni has been described as a continuous ‘hunting’ of people and gold, the settings of which, were as obscure and complicated as the life of these people: exploitation of people, exploitation of gold. It has been a history of slave work to extract the maximum gold for foreign or national masters. “Fire was used against these people, they were put dynamite in the belly, they were dig with the chisel and the hammer, their bones were broken, their spinal was taken out, drilled, and pounced as the gold mines themselves and hunted to the most hidden spaces.”

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191 Ibid, p. 15.
But the strength of the Moti endured and may be seen in the way they are looking at the mountains, for Bogza one of the most profound and illustrating gesture that reveals their bond. The Moti are absorbing the mountains shred by shred through their eyelid, either ragged, steep or covered in snow. For the famous Romanian author, this is a divine human-nature bond based on the joy of the human being to harmonize his or her life with nature, the joy of melting with it, the joy of jawing the earth’s essences, even those found in a local apple that a woman is eating.

The problem of poverty in the Land of the Moti (...) is complicated and somehow becomes unsolvable given the deep love these people have for their lonely, rocky, and sterile mountains. The economic measures taken without consideration to this ancestral element could not be fruitful. (...) **They do not know to talk a lot about their love: they just feel that after few months of living on a flat land, they start to dry up.**¹⁹²

The above story is an organic and instinctual explanation that cannot make sense unless felt by bones and blood. Virtue or a sin, as Gogza argues, it is not for us to judge but to accept. Their choice for a clean but perpetual form of sterile land is a choice for a form of poverty that they are aware of and accept, it is not a complaint nor a pride but a vascular and germinal choice beyond considerations such as profit. As Bogza argues, it is a special kind of poverty: clean, linear, clear, fair, and nude; it is the poverty of a naked human being, the poverty of a frugal simple life.

The power the mountain can have on a person’s spirit is appalling: it can dry up your heart and turn it into stone. It can make one frowned, fierce, brave and bitter. It is this power that created people like Horea, the historical figure of the Moti and the symbol of fight against slavery in the Romanian Lands. Horea is one of the old slaves of being butchered, cut into

pieces, with parts of his body being hanged in four different villages – he is still remembered like the remarkable rocky man whose story illustrates the pain of years of slavery in Transylvania.

It is also possible that the mountain represents such power over the life meaning of these people as they are the ones who know their insides best. The daily work of the people surrounding the “golden” mountains consists of hard work inside the mountain ‘stomach’. They have been working there like mole-hills for centuries, searching for gold on narrow and dangerous corridors inside the mountain being often killed by accidents, directly or by illness, gradually.

To what extent these sacred connection to the mountains and the land is still a reality of the Rosienii is difficult to measure and easy to reject given the overwhelming displacement. Moreover viewed from the perspective of ‘what is modern and rational’ (in other words the ‘myth’ of modernity), these beliefs are the exact type of beliefs that had to be eliminated as archaic and superstitious while replaced with monetary, supposedly neutral conceptions of value, poverty and wealth. However, the narrative, as a national myth, is reproduced and perpetuated in the struggle at Rosia Montana. Talking of nature is talking of wealth; talking of nature is also talking of self; the nature Motii wish to preserve is God’s creation, part of their lifestyle, giving meaning to their life. As one local told me, “I cannot live without waking up in the morning with the mountain in front of me. The air you have here is nowhere to be found”. The local opposition hints to the idea that when nature becomes property, land becomes just a commodity and is devalued of precisely those values that gave meaning to their life-style. Some values should not be “for sale” in spite of what the global economic system may label them.
Capital economy represented by the corporation appears here as a disjunctive order, historically and artificially constructed by people situated in particular context. As one local told me about the project, “One single word: wild capitalism! Meaning those capitalists who only want to fill their pockets with more money, showing no respect for what is around them”. This perception is a reaction against the portrayal of the corporate project as a neutral/natural opportunity whereby depoliticizing policy based on technocratic decision making and making people’s desires look like foolish dreams.

As Shapiro writes about the first impact of globalization for indigenous America, “The act of mapping and naming was, in the eyes of the Indians, an act of trespassing, not upon property but on religion, upon the sacred itself. The white man’s maps threatened a whole way of life.”\textsuperscript{193} The justification was that lands were wasted, spaces inhabited by savage fools/foes-fighting. The enlightenment model persists: in post-communist Romania, within the context of globalization, the tendency to homogenize life-styles can be observed and along it, the tendency to devalue and marginalize as inefficiently old and poor, traditional means of being. Stripped of values that have a non-monetary, spiritual values, it is no surprised the Rosia becomes, in the corporate story, a desert land that must be interfered with and exploited to extract the material value for commercial purposes.

In 1927, Suciu writes about Rosia Montana as the site where

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an unequal struggle is waged between human capital and financial capital. The human falls. Money does this in two ways: through its absence and though the evilness of those who have it. The operational factors have to be known: capital and labor. This way we can understand the problem of Rosia Montana in all its nudity.\textsuperscript{194}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{194} Petre Suciu: Rosia Montana: Monographic Investigation, (Cluj: Institute of Editing and Graphic Arts, 1927), p. 10.
This ‘nudity’ is again revealed after eighty-four years. Poverty and wealth are nowadays problematized by the local people in Rosia Montana within a context of unclear location of authority and ownership over means/relations of production, labor and capital: the state is ‘silent’, local authorities are corrupt, other actors take decisions for them while transparency and accountability are simple formalities to be checked. One local whose name is Sechei Zeno makes an interesting and terrifying point in this respect suggesting again, for us, the fact that the village itself has received a ‘death penalty’: If the corporation wishes to end poverty and make the village flourish, how is it that even making coffins has become a bad business? “My profession is carpenter. Gold destroyed my business and did not give jobs to people! People left...I don’t even have demands for coffins anymore!” The corporation is, for the 54 years old man, a mere impediment to work and flourish; and the examples of discursive production and reproduction of poverty may continue:

Long time ago people were making a living with two cows; I now have fifteen cows and they say my farm is not large enough for their European standards. Why the hell do you tell me that I’m poor? Why do I need to consider your standards? So I’ll be under your control?

The above story belongs to one of the leaders of Alburnus Maior. His charismatic appearance made him famous. He gives many interviews and talks very freely about
his determination in defending his property: “If I alone remain here, they have to respect all my rights”. His accounts on what means to be poor and who decides that make us challenge the reification of modernization and globalization, as ‘myths’ of elite forces meant to perpetuate power. He does not hide his suspicion regarding the rules of global economy in these times and especially in Romania. He talks of ‘wild capitalism’ that pursues only profits for a few and creates the many ‘losers’ and ‘dependents’.

Born in Bucium, close to Rosia he became a part of the Rosia’s community when he married a local girl. He is now 40 years old and has a daughter. His family works together raising cows. He is very proud of his milk farm and of his future plans for attracting tourists to a boarding house. He talks about these plans as he shares with me his belief that people will always be dependent on others if they do not have the courage to decide for themselves.

Spokesman of Alburnus Maior, his information and ideas connect various interpretations of the conflict. His suspicion with regard to both the corporate action, the state action (“The state only wants to sell”) as well as the EU’s action and the Soros’s action makes his perspective an incredibly layered and complex one. It is important to see how his perception on the state, as a main culpable for the original situation of having to fight a corporation, offers us a deeper understanding of the national context of “development”, rights and freedoms.

Here we have a case that is more dramatic because of the corporation but the most disturbing is that the situation is similar for the whole country. Villages all over Romania die because authorities do not have strategies or visions. They only want to spend chaotically on cars and other stuff. They are not architects of futures development but candidates running for elections and positions for personal gain, bribing people with beer and sausages. Our country is stupid...we don’t know how to make money, there is no real country management, and they only want to sell the country’s resources. People have ideas, but in order to implement them, you need legislation, strategy, authorities to encourage; if authorities are not protecting and supporting the people but on the contrary, what can we do? Their role as authorities should be to create infrastructure and facilitation for supporting people materialize their ideas and
projects. (...) The main problem is at the level of authorities who do not understand that they should take us seriously and make a change.

In his speech we can read many of the concerns related to development as a politically and economic discursive construction. He questions development as promoted by the corporate supporters and generally by actors such as the World Bank, the European Union or the corporations as marginalizing the power of local poorer people who do not have access to the resources needed to meet the standards of these global actors. He, thus, thinks ”all politicians are puppets in the hands of people with money…” He openly talks about his preference for alternative development that comes from common decision-making and consultations at the local level and tells to his people (as local community leader) the following:

I don’t want any type of development…don’t want just anyone to come here to change the area. I tell people openly “you have to grow up, you cannot be dependent on Gold or whoever comes…dependent on others just as drug addicts.

Our interlocutor seems to be telling us that, in order for the ‘new poor’ - destitute by globalization’s processes - to becoming agents of their own destinies they need to regain a policy space where they can articulate and make visible their own narrative. He talks of alternative development as having to do with quality of life and people’s choice to live productive and creative lives according to their needs and interests.

From the local’s story we conclude that the privatization of national wealth is not simply the story of a liberal ’comparative advantage’ that brings local ‘goods and services’ (including economic migrants) into foreign markets for returns to be localized; rather, it means alienation through uprooting and commodification, ambiguous homogenization, ‘predictable fluidity’ of
economic standards, certainty and uncertainty, discipline and free-ride. Thus, critical perspectives on liberal globalization would point out to evidence showing no clear-cut link between globalization and poverty reduction. The benefits (concentrated in certain ‘pockets’) are to be viewed in a relational way with the simultaneous losses, enclaves of poverty as destitution, landlessness and environmental damage.

Development is discursively transformed into a tool for helping out those left out of the bonanza of free trade and liberalization and the means to appease our conscience and our sense of guilt. Development funds and their attached conditionality and discourses are ways of disciplining developing countries into joining the ranks of the globalized in a way that perpetuates a hierarchical and unequal world. In this case, destitution appears as the ‘necessary’ evil in the mindset which places monetary metric of what is wealth; the efforts or talents of millions of people could not possibly find a ‘market’ to better their lot or worse, find themselves excluded from the market.

The literature in the field of poverty and development points to a common perception: it is difficult to define poverty, to list all the causes of poverty, to precisely identify the poor of the world or to make a very accurate evaluation of poverty reduction strategies. The orthodox conception of poverty is ‘lack of money’ to satisfy basic needs. This outlook on poverty is also generally the result of globalization of Western culture and expansion of market capitalism. After all, it is the World Bank, which invented the headcount measure (average income per household). However, the situation at Rosia Montana is very well described by in the distinction Nandy makes between poverty and destitution:

There is a basic distinction between poverty, which has always been with us, and destitutions, which has become more pronounced only recently given the assault on traditional communities and their life support system. Destitution is directly attributable to processes of development (…).
The presently trendy slogan of globalization can be read as the newest effort to disguise both the declining political clout of the historically disadvantaged and an interest in poverty.\textsuperscript{195}

The deprivation is double given the industrialization of communist times while the destitution continues in other forms. It is not the actual lack of resources that makes Romania “poor” in the eyes of its citizens but rather a lack of popular identification with its resources as a “fragile” possession, unstable ownership and unclear right over it, rights that are covered not only by legislation (in itself unreliable) but also by a historical economic background of instability. Industrialization, both communist and the current neo-liberal privatizations, alienated people from the harvest of their labor which brings poverty close to un-freedom in a relationship situation.

\textbf{Roots of Meanings}

The ‘sacredness’ narrative as we choose to call it in this chapter, combining religious, nationalist and cultural motives of the Moti Country, stands in contrast with the corporate discourse described in the previous chapter; the latter is trying to legitimize cognitive categories of knowing at the expense of forms of relating to reality that the former habituates from centuries of belonging to the land in the Apuseni Mountains; the former involves less rational control and more instinctual/emotional attachment to nature and landscapes, as homes for the self rather than as exploration sites. However, in the milieu of cognitive knowledge predominance, the concept of ‘faith’ becomes extravagant if not foolish.

Therefore, the defenders of these lands and the voices of the mine are overshadowed by considerations of profit and production. Believing in fortuna (fate and chance) as opposed to leaving nothing to chance, the modern impetus of security, control and exploitation (of nature, of people) is being strongly promoted with all PR means by the corporate supporters tolerating no uncertainty: “Within this intensification of the security-oriented gaze, the meanings of landscapes and people everywhere are subjected to an intensified form of objectification.”

Any myth has a profound symbolic meaning for those who employ it – it also presupposes an essential truth that does not function in terms of what is real or unreal, or what is true or false; rather it has its own logic and structure that gives an ethical code for the life of the people who believe in it. Rather than destroying the myths, history has to just make the distinction between myths and “objectivity”, avoiding absolutist approaches while acknowledging the impossibility of living outside the imaginary. Most historical myths that animate the local opposition movement are related to the Romanian culture and mentality (a certain nationalistic pride melting in an attitude of self-depreciation and distrust, ambiguous aversion towards the “foreigner”), or related to the natural environment (the forest - “codru” - is like a brother to the Romanian, the mountain is an element at the base of his identity).

These themes, presented in this chapter, mixing motives of religion, nationalism and cultural spirituality draw a “moral geography” of the space called Rosia Montana and of the nation indirectly, at the borderline between nationalist self-pride and self-victimization, a dominant geopolitics combined with geo-religious politics presented as un-contentious and non-normative “a set of silent ethical assumptions that pre-organize explicit ethico-political

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discourses.”¹⁹⁷ Medieval religious notions have often been reused as mythology to serve state-building purposes: heavenly inspiration, providential blessing or divine leadership: “The modern geopolitical imagination, it seems, begins where the medieval geo-religious imagination falls away.”¹⁹⁸

For the Rosienii, the break between a medieval religious space and a modern Westphalian space is not so visible especially given their subaltern relationship with the state as an object of ambivalence. Therefore, one can observe that the appeal to religious notion that more or less directly resonate with nationalist purposes do not refer to a specific national or governmental project but rather to a form of patriotic and loyal feeling of belonging to a space with a particular culture. The everyday recycling of historical memories, specific archaic morals and morality, communitarian and religious symbols have strengthened the opposition to the corporate mining project in Rosia Montana.

¹⁹⁷ Michael Shapiro, Violent Cartographies: Mapping Cultures of War (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 16
Chapter IV

‘Our Mountains Bear Gold and We Beg From Door To Door’
Landscapes of Resistance

A popular local saying, the title of this chapter echoes the overall ambivalence with regard to the corporate project. On the one hand, the saying can be read as a sign of bitterness over the incapacity of the Romanian state to exploit the richness of Rosia Montana and, by implication that foreign investment is needed; on the other hand, one can see it as a desire to stop asking for help from ‘outside’ while imagining ways to use the local richness for and by local people. In addition, the title of this chapter also points out to the tensioned interdependent relation between the ‘other’ or the ‘global’ and the ‘we’, the national or the ‘local’ illustrated through the stories about idealized attachment to home as a space of beauty, and hospitality versus the global ventures of the migrant, the “beggar” and the servant.

As the chapter will reveal, this relation has implications for the aesthetics of resistance as it nurtures ambiguous ‘feeling(scapes)’ with regard to capital economy: the tragic encounter of commercial and ethical life mirrored in the decision on “to sell or not to sell”. It is a debate over which values can or cannot be commodified and over people living with both the fantasy of wanting to move (and/or stay) and the threat of having to move, thus, becoming part of what Appadurai calls the “ethnoscape” of the global cultural economy. Primordia (whether kinship or language) may have become globalized as Appadurai argues, but it, however, struggles to remain localized since the conditions of possibility for movements of people are often exogenous to the people themselves.
The Rosia Montana differend is to be analyzed in the context of the intensification of ‘glocal’ connections when issues affecting individuals at home become issues abroad and vice versa; the problem of (cultural) reproduction of Romanians as well as their repression abroad has become tied to the politics of self-victimization and patriotic identity construction at home and vice-versa. Globalization, thus, is a story about states (“real capital circulating through the elusive body of the state”199) just as much as about non-state actors mirrored at the micro-level in subjective stories of people in their everyday life.

This chapter further contributes to the purpose of this dissertation by adding to the aesthetics of resistance, attempting to bring to life uncertain positioning, incomplete visions and also emotions – the concerns, fears, hopes and disappointments of the people of Rosia Montana as disrupted subjectivities at the crossroad of Romania’s capitalist development. The unstable feelings of these individuals, their aversions and hatred, their pride and their aspirations, their fears and dreams, are just as important as the rationale, the context and the economic, social and political forces that frame the controversy. I met people who said that their own home is tension-ridden, different members of the family having different views about the corporation and about what the family should do. In Ranciere’s words, the ‘partition of the sensible’ is contentious.

The emotional and moral geographies of the “migrant self” are relevant when talking of landscapes or feeling(scapes) of resistance; the suffix “scapes” points out to the fluid, irregular shapes of landscapes, not objectively given but rather as perspectives constructed by actors which are historically, politically and linguistically situated, from families and villages to states and corporations. Imagining lives in the shadows of compliance and resistance, imagination itself

becomes a social practice, a form of negotiation between individuals (agency) and “globally defined fields of possibility.”

To Sell or Not to Sell: A Tragic Encounter

Between 2002 and 2010 more and more Rosienii in Rosia Montana had chosen sold their land (in its entirety or partially) and leave. Various reasons have been invoked: lack of jobs or economic activities (remember that by declaring the area mono-industrial, different economic investments or activities were banned), desire for a different lifestyle away from the tensioned situation, children’s needs to attend different schools. Some of them felt the pressure of leaving with bitterness, confessing to the local opposition by saying: “if you give me a job, I will stay, I will not sell”. Some of them return to their former home in Rosia and cry for their loss. Some are well adjusted in their new homes in other villages or cities across Romania. Perception over the corporation’s conduct towards the Rosienii is also ambivalent.

Despite the strong “Save Rosia Montana” campaign, the corporation found the means to consolidate its stay in Rosia. The initial enthusiasm about mobilization against the corporation has gradually ceased among the local inhabitants and the situation changed slowly but surely. As Rosienii tell their story, the intimidation and the manipulation techniques used by the corporation varied and many times people received their presence as an invitation for displacement, an opportunity to change their lives for better or worse. However, the discourse of displacement reveals a non-choice, a naturalized conformity with the inescapable global flows.

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The Gold agents started to say: ‘be careful because it is something international! You will have to leave!’ others said: ‘you must sell until you have offers because after a while money will be finished and you will be left without both land and money.

The consent of the Rosienii to individual negotiations as initiated by the corporate representatives has been fragile; as one local man confessed to me, “what ‘negotiation’? They tell us what the terms and the money offer is and we can only accept or not”. In addition, the situation that financial packages were only offered periodically and secretly (offers were strictly confidential and made from time to time when the political situation seems more favorable to the project) made the corporate tools of normalizing local’s behavior even more efficient: people sometimes sold their properties for lower prices just because they were afraid the corporation might stop buying land.

Unable to avoid the individualized negotiation process (most Rosienii, even if they refuse negotiation, had been periodically visited, if not harassed, by corporate representatives presenting their offer), the Rosienii had no choice but to let the corporation set the rules; it has thus had the power to fragment and torn not only the opposition movement but also families themselves. In Rosienii’ words, ‘divide et impera’ (divide and conquer).

They started to break up families, buying the younger ones, convincing the older, the parents…through intimidation, blackmail trying to oblige them to withdraw from Alburnus. They closed RosiaMin, the state factory, so that people become unemployed, another form of intimidation.

Instead of our cultural center they made their own information point (or better I should say disinformation). They even wanted to take the school building so that we send our kids away. Even the town doctor left. They do everything in their power to make us leave and give up.

Leaving or staying in Rosia Montana has never been a simple straightforward decision. Though in the beginning of the controversy there were stronger assumptions that those who leave
are simply "weak" or "greedy" and those who stay are "strong" or morally superior, this view has increasingly become questionable. There are people who choose to stay merely to "wait" for a better price for their properties or those who leave (settle somewhere else) but periodically (or symbolically) return to Rosia Montana. There are also people who try to keep a piece of property in Rosia although they sold their house and land and there are those who stay and feel either unclear about what to do or motivate their staying culturally by appealing to certain feelings and attachments.

A popular traditional saying in Romanian culture is alerting that ‘money is the devil’s eye’ – it can break up families and destroy lives. Such an aversion towards financial speculation and accumulation without consideration of other values has been illustrated by numerous Romanian novelists and poets. Beyond moralizing and ideological overtones, this attitude (re)constitutes identities, expectations and responsibilities. “How can you sell your parents’ home?” is, thus, a question raised in innumerable conversations with Rosienii, an illustration of a tragic encounter, that between the ethical and the commercial life. The commercial life is both necessary and destructive and the relationship between ethics and business is a tragic one.201 One of the most frequently mentioned values of the few Rosienii who decided to preserve their homes in Rosia is related to culture and traditions. These values have tremendous power over their life-decisions also in relation to a belief that both, themselves and the land (the mine) are protected by God. Consequently, it would be contrary to this belief to allow the alienation of parents’ homes and ancestors’ land.

Moreover, home has a special meaning related to security: the more memories are fixed in space, the stronger they might appear. One of the most important spaces for memory is our

201 In Mike Shapiro, Cinematic Geopolitics, (NY: Routledge: 2008), p 111.
parents’ home because it somewhat contains the strongest thoughts and dreams. The Rosienii’
description of their feelings with regard to displacement made me think of deprivation not only
in terms of livelihood (which may be potentially reconstructed somewhere else) but deprivation
in terms of memories, a denial of the value of their past way of living.

I am terrified at the thought I may never have a home to come back to…maybe I will have to
pack and leave in the end because I cannot live alone on a mountain. I’m scared because I don’t
know which way to go.

Around 56 people that left died and not necessarily because they were old or sick…but they
did not adjust, they did not like their new life …some committed suicide some wanted to
come back, they were longing for their home and their land, but it was too late Some come
here and tell us: ‘Do not ever sell!’ or they go to church or kiss the door of their former house
crying.

The tragic encounter between cultural/ethical concerns and commercial imperatives is
visible both at the macro-level of the controversy – a difficulty to choose, an in-between(ness) –
and at micro-level – families and individuals torn between such pressures. The corporate project
promoted by RMGC has created another instance of modernization pressure in the context of
global capitalist flows. Irrespective of the traditional cultural modes of perceiving values and
objects, modern capitalist economy gradually attaches a price to anything: “modernization is a
process by which capitalism uproots and makes mobile what is grounded, clears away that which
impedes circulation and makes exchangeable that which is singular.”^202 Thus, the reclaiming of
“what is not for sale” is a subversion of a seemingly naturalized order of exchange, a disturbing
blockage in the global flow.

A resident of Roșia Montana refusing the relocation in a discussion with Industry Minister, Radu Berceanu

‘Selling’ an Ambiguous Message

The Gold corporation did not force anybody to move. We left because we were not well.

Selling one’s land in Rosia Montana land has often been presented as a “smart move”, an intelligent choice to negotiate a good price and access a different opportunity for a life outside the deadlock of a periphery village. According to the corporate propaganda, those who sold are to be seen as ‘normal’ people looking for modern lives, moving on to a different life style instead of being incapable of adjusting to the new realities. The ‘seller’ is, hence, a citizen who understands the global economy, who ungraded himself from the old, and does not fall into the
trap of ideological activism. Apparently, his behavior is not ‘politically’ nor ‘emotionally’
driven: it is the ‘snobbery’ of (ideologically driven) alien forces that mobilizes people in
singularizing and sacralizing things that are basically not superior to the world of commerce.
Therefore, according to corporate supporters, vendibility (the capacity to sell and attach a price)
is an “unmistakable indicator of a commodity status” and such status can be applied Rosia
Montana.

Sharing the corporation’s discourse, some of the former Rosieni believe in the possibility
that the corporate project can bring progress and better their life-style while it can also improve
the actual situation of the environment already damaged by previous mining. The condition
would have been that the project goes as the RMGC promises (a claim that is questionable):
‘Should the corporation make the project as it says, both the people and the environment would
benefit’. Therefore, there are people in Rosia who present their self-displacement as a new happy
beginning regarding their former home as a devalued land; as one displaced person declares,
“Things have changed for me ever since the corporation came here. My sons are both working
for it now. They graduated in IT and accounting studies respectively.”

These sort of statements make us think that for some of the displaced people the ‘dreams’
of capitalism came true. The fantasies of individual gain, of ‘success’ and modern living were
made possible only because of the corporation’s generosity when no other opportunity was
offered. Liberation and escape from the stagnant situation in Rosia was accessible with only one
signature which made their property a corporate possession. As Navaro-Yashin would argue this
pragmatism would be a symptom “about an income, about bread and butter. Alienation is self-

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evident, but what else could be done? Whether (enlightened) false consciousness or simply alienation, these forms of routine pragmatism have become almost fashionable in post-communism reproducing the power of capitalism.

At a closer look however, there is also uneasiness with this respect; talking with few of the people who sold their land one would notice that content goes hand in hand with disappointment. Memories of “home” and of the past are a daily companion of an anguished present and displacement appears as a non-authentic choice; moving from Rosia was something one “had to do” for the sake of a future that sounds different, a future where Rosia and its lifestyle become a thing for an anachronistic past:

If there is no Gold, other company would come. Peace and recreation in Rosia are long gone. In time, Rosia will become just a legend.

We are shivering when we hear of Rosia. It was hard there…one cannot live there anymore, it is a dead place.

We all had jobs during communism. It was safer. Now, with investors, one day you work the next day you are unemployed.

Most people (both remaining Rosienii and displaced ones) describe life in Rosia as a particularly difficult one, with no job opportunities being the main problem but also the lack of social and health services, lack of shops and other utilities. Some of the displaced people lament the opposition for being “nostalgic” as to believe one can make a living out of agro-tourism or harvesting forest-fruits and mushrooms. Others admit that while life in their new home may be easier, they are looked upon as ‘aliens’ and they feel alienated from their home where they could

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trust and be supported by their neighbor. Some complain that the new location may have more
shops but no church for them.

Selling more properties from Rosia to the corporation and barely managing to buy a house
elsewhere is outrageous. Expenses for utilities and daily needs were not as high in Rosia. We also
had a garden there. Once you left, you alienated yourself from neighbors…feeling alone as a
stranger because of living 30 years there, I had a neighbor whom I could count on…This
uprooting…anywhere you move, is not like home. There are differences between those who sold
to Gold. Some didn’t even sell their house and made loads of money. Others sold their home and
are still poor.

We don’t like it here. They don’t like us here. The water is bad. Everything costs so much. Hell
with them!”

Dionisie Andreica sold his land in exchange for a brand new house in the residential area
constructed by the corporation in the city of Alba Iulia. Seduced by the modern constructions, he
later realized that all materials that the buildings were made off had been fake or of very poor
quality being devastated by the first serious storm. In addition, the space allocated for these
houses and their gardens is significantly smaller than the one he had in Rosia. Now he openly
expressed his regret about selling without negotiating and he warns everybody about the lies of
the corporation. He feels betrayed, angry and powerless, having to cope with the financial burden
of a new (damaged) house, the reparations and the higher cost of utilities in the city. A neighbor
of Dionisie, afraid of giving his name, confesses about his distress: “The company does not need
us anymore, it used us, it fooled us, uprooting us from the gardens of our childhood”206 He know
that while he is going to be unemployed, the company will first give jobs to all the relatives of
the Romanian officials who supported its project.

The memories of Rosia are mixed: while remembering times when the community was peaceful and prosperous, when people were celebrating Easter together in the piata (market) eating and drinking, the hardship that followed especially after the closing of the state-mining was a bitter enough memory to declare that “I would not advise my enemy to move to Rosia”.

The Romanian Academy is crazy to tell a miner to harvest mushrooms for a living. You cannot make a living only out of subsistence farming, without factories. Capitalism is tough, the toughest stage of humanity. The state did not think of alternatives. They did not bring other investors.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the corporation has taken great advantage of the widespread perception that economic growth cannot exist without factories. As Gramsci would say, “hegemony here is born in the factory”\textsuperscript{207}. Indeed what the corporation managed to do is to mobilize a great part of the community and of the nation around the ‘production’ (exploitation of gold) and work as wage-earning and job creation. This is however not entirely the ‘virtu’ of the capitalist economy; reminiscence of communist industrialization (job security especially) has added to this mobilization.

Capitalism may be the ‘toughest stage of humanity’ according to some Rosienii but it is more importantly inescapable; moreover, the immediate mentioning of the state after articulating this inevitability can make us think that there is a perception according to which the state could have done something to halt this hardship - maybe by not allowing for the state-mine to be privatized or by not declaring the area as ‘disadvantaged’ or by creating other economic opportunities.

In any case, the ideological and political propaganda of the corporation has found the right ‘seeds’ to grow into co-option into the fantasy of capitalist liberation and prosperity. This may be the new ‘enslavement’ I first heard about when travelling to Rosia: the dependence of the majority on the ‘wage’ in the context of resource alienation. We can only ‘sell’ our own labor in order to make a living. This market seems beyond their control and hence they internalize it as natural and inescapable. This reification of capitalistic relations makes the alienation and fetishism *sine qua non* of life and human destiny itself.\(^{208}\)

The acceptance of corporate presence has been fueled by the perception that the state (the political decision-makers in Romania) does not create any alternative nor care about investing in the development of a local national industry. Zeno was telling me that he has compassion for the local people who accepted temporary jobs for the Gold: ‘they need to survive! People are not to be blamed but those who rule.’ There are also people who despite agreeing to support the RMGC project, express strong feelings in favor of state-supported mining complemented by other industries:

> It is a very disastrous thing to destroy your own economy instead of developing it, mechanizing it, even if you want to reduce the staff – […] reduce the staff by making the enterprise profitable, but then bring in implements which enable the unit to continue its activity. In addition to the mine, other income sources should be developed – light industry as in Campeni, factories with 300 – 400 [local employees]. The mine will only have, during the production phase, 350 – 400 workers. They should offer work in another area of employment.

> It would have been best if the Gold would have worked at the same time with the state-owned mine. Almost anyone would have had a job.

Why does a large majority support an investor widely perceived as corrupt? Is it acceptable to ‘sell’ one’s house and dead relatives? Such loyalty or ‘subservience’ may appear as

a pathological manifestation of a self-colonizing culture. The morality of the new economic and social order has also been made possible given the persistent construction of it as place where nothing happens, isolated, backward, doomed. Was selling the present a means for controlling the future? Or was it a means for the control of the present in exchange for a still uncertain future?

Buying the land could have more than a spatial relevance, contriving the exploitation zone: it could also be seen as having the economic and symbolic importance regarding the alienation of the means of production. For many Rosienii the house and the land were more than the signifier of a ‘residence’: it was a means to ‘put some food on the table’ and for trade by means of farming and cultivating the land. The renunciation of this value leaves their labor-power the only power of exchange these people would have, as a commodity. The capital (industrial) economy functions such that the many disposed become the pawns of a global auction where they could only sell (cheap) labor-power; they would have to marketize their labor power on this market, also an increasingly difficult task. Their proletarization would now and thereby be finalized, after the communist industrialization, and their dependence on the ‘slave-wage’ and credit would be established as the ‘new reality’ of capital economy.

Ideology is not merely a belief system or a ‘false consciousness’ alienating people from their own interest (though it may be misrecognition indeed); ideology may be seen as a set of practices in a subject’s relation to the ‘real’. Persons learn to objectify themselves regarding their identities as natural. The need of ‘marketability’ is also of relevance in the subject’s conformity with the socially prevalent ideology. \(^{209}\) A function necessary for individual adaptation is ideology’s capacity to produce docility and normalization, of which the corporation in Rosia surely knew how to take advantage.

\(^{209}\) Shapiro, *Politics of Representation*, Adorno p. 25
Resistance to Death?

Nobody has asked us if we agree that our churches and cemeteries be excavated, bulldozed over in order to become a cyanide lake; they want to move us on the hill on the top of the valley so that every day we look into what was our valley and the only thing we will see is how they are eating up our land.

There are also Rosienii who have been (and remained) more militant in refusing the commodification of their homes. Still living in Rosia, they have placed a metallic tablet on their houses to convey the message “This property is not for sale” in reaction to the tablets the RMGC placed on each building they now own. By actively participating in the resistance actions of the community organization Alburnus Maior, these Rosienii have become „visible” in the sense that Ranciere is making as an act of subjectification, disturbing the ‘natural’ order and creating politics by articulating previously unheard voices, by making visible and problematic what seemed hidden and unproblematic.\(^\text{210}\) Reluctant to calling themselves activists (a controversial label with communist resonances) or ecologists, many of these Rosienii prefer to consider themselves ‘citizens’.

‘Not selling’ does not, however, equate clear-cut satisfaction about the situation of the area either. Many of the remaining Rosienii (and especially the younger ones) are expressing distress about the deadlock of their village. Ovidiu is a 31 years old local man whose main preoccupation is finding a job. He was extremely bitter because he felt betrayed by the corporation and also by the state which does nothing to improve their lives.

Life is not good, if I don’t have a job, stability to create a family. The main problem is unemployment...there should be different companies here to give us jobs. Otherwise our life is on-hold. But the City Hall Council does not give approvals for anything because of Gold. We had some courses to specialize ourselves for other jobs, we worked from time to time, we had some other promises…we were given some more hope. I do have hope, I try to stay optimistic; I get courage but talking with people around here but I am also afraid that nothing will be made and I’ll still be unemployed…without job, without meaning and purpose in life. If they would
have really helped the community the project would have started! But it’s better for us to be healthy ... We have beautiful nature, we like our world here, the people. Traditional mining would be acceptable but I would not work underground my father died because of that when he was only 46 years old.

One other story also caught my attention. Talking to Lucretia I think I understood more about the ambivalence that lingers with regard to “leaving (selling)” or “staying” in Rosia Montana. Lucretia, a woman in her forties, was my host during my first stay in Rosia Montana. She lives in a big house together with her mother, husband and has a son attending the university in the city of Timisoara. Her whole family was torn about what to do. She was proud that she had managed to send her son to school and to take care of her mother in the same time. However, this was about to change because the life in Rosia was becoming increasingly complicated given the lack of jobs, even temporary jobs in the near villages. Lucretia felt her heart was telling her to stay and continue life in Rosia; she loved her mother’s home but she also loved her son and was feeling guilty that she does not have enough money to give him for university: ‘how will I find money for him? I am still young and I should be working more but we have no jobs...’; she was telling me with a sad tone.

Her husband was still working in a different village but there was not enough money. Most of all, they felt the corporate presence and actions as a huge pressure and a constant reminder of the fact that their living in the parents’ home is under threat. This was becoming unbearable (sometimes they were sad to tears) especially after hearing news about neighbors who sold and left. The feeling that was mostly discouraging was that of slow but sure extinction of the village. How can one live within a community that seems sentenced to death? Her story prompted me to recognize the complexity of her case given the difficulty to choose between giving up the traditional life-style and especially the home and opposing the project. Lucretia
was feeling stuck and did not know what to do and what to think anymore; she could not understand why there is no care for her people from the government and why this corporation is intimidating them to leave their parent-home.

While she repeatedly expressed her worry about the financial situation of her family, she was also letting me know about the good situation of her household: like many people from the country-side, she was proud of her cows and pigs, her large yard and house, her land. She was disappointed by the fact that the she might be forced to leave all that because of the corporate pressure. The pressure of displacement was a burden on her: any small instances of joy, such as looking at the beautiful landscape around her house, were quickly overshadowed by the persistent presence of the corporation almost as a shadow. It was as if she was afraid to enjoy home anymore in the face of the inevitability of having to give it up. This was a back and forth feeling, since sadness about this potential abandonment was compensated with joy about showing a visitor about the beauty and worth of their home, accompanied by the request to tell the world about it.

The observation that the village is disappearing (more and more people were selling their land) was enough to make her and her mother cry. As other Rosienii I have talked to, Lucretia does not see herself as an activist. Her house, being a little further from the center-piazza seemed more isolated from the center-activism going on there. She used to say she prefers to stay aside and go on with her busy life while this should be resistance enough. Often, her family’s anger was expressed through curses towards the corporation and a clear articulation of the conclusion „we are not selling them anything”.
None of the words I heard from the Rosienii gave me the impression that displacement can possibly be a „solution” to a problem that was not dialogically defined and negotiated anyway. What was the problem of Rosia anyway? If communism imposed itself brutally similarly disrespects their values (and rights), stripping them of their possessions such as the “cuxe” (personal/private mining spaces) nowadays, the corporate practice is to construct a certain “truth” as self-evident to be imposed on the people – this truth is the need for modern development and change.

However, the cost of displacement and annihilation of a community and a life-style does not appear as “real” (but manufactured by foreign forces such as the Greens) in the eyes of the corporate project, as we have seen from the previous section.

There are families who had children in the university, wanted to have a different life, I don’t mind; what made me furious is that these people are mobilized by Gabriel against those who don’t sell. They should respect the rights to stay here; this is the politics of the corporation, their cynicism. But there are lots of reasons why people want to sell…whatever it is, if they want to sell their roots for cars and TVs…that’s their right!

It is here that we can see the tension between capitalist hegemonic tendency (the corporate supporters indicating what is to be valued) and local resistance where value is established on different criteria, that seem obsolete with capitalist modernization. One consequence of this tragic encounter between commercial life and ethical life is the naturalization of commodification within the context of discursive production of poverty and wealth. Capital economy within post-communist instability has further destabilized not only financial policy but also people’s ontological security, attachments and situatedness in connection to value: “it is not surprising that people’s ontological anxieties are evoked in response to changes in the warrants
for the value of money, not only because their wealth is at stake but also because they want their exchanges connected to a foundation with collective symbolic guarantees.” 211

Rosia’s Sensible Experience

“(…) we cannot help but notice that the polemics around this project has an emotional connotation while the real arguments are rarely heard which replaces the debate with mere panic appeals” 212

A frequent argument in the discursive war of Rosia is the idea of emotional involvement: supporters of the corporate project criticize the activists as being emotional and this “emotional” luggage is seen as an impediment to understanding the ‘real’ issue about development. Thus, the emotional aspect of discourse is of particular interest in drawing a landscape of resistance and will constitute the topic of this section: emotions became both a factor of contention (for the project opponents) and a target of “rational” accusation (for the corporation).

In 2007 the corporation send an open letter to the Soros Foundation where we can read an illustration of the fact that the corporate discourse is ideological to the extent that it poses as non-valuational. They express a form of ‘regret’ about what is ultimately seen as an erroneous (and dangerous) perception on the situation which would make the two camps fundamentally different: “Perhaps we are destined to differ. Still, it is the case that people are entitled to their

own opinions, but not to their own facts. The narrative of corporate development is promoted in the technical, scientific and thus supposedly neutral, non-political discourse. The display of corporate flawlessness in terms of human, political and economic dimension is to be read in its focus on the so-called rational, measurable, observable and objective tones by contrast to the flawed i.e. emotional, subjective argument of the opponents.

This polemics between the facts and the emotions leads us to the core issue of this dissertation, that is, aesthetic resistance, given that the polemics itself has to a lot to do with partitioning the sensible experience of Rosia Montana. Therefore, the conflict of Rosia is a conflict over the existence of particular spheres of experiences, which makes it (and its protagonists) political in Ranciere’s understanding of aesthetic politics: Politics is first the conflict about the very existence of that sphere of experience, the reality of those common objects and the capacity of those subjects. When talking about ‘aesthetics’ one can think about the way in which the sensible world can be partitioned and re-partitioned. What are the feelings one ‘should’ or ‘should not’ feel? What is the ‘normalcy’ of certain feelings or beliefs?

To understand ‘facts’ one has to already create meaning and to comprehend ‘meanings’ of things is nevertheless to understand the structures of imagination that offered those meanings, the way these structures are historically developed as practices. Knowing, having ‘ideas’ about things involves imagination; idea comes from the Greek word ‘eide’ meaning ‘light’ and thus is in itself a figure of speech, an exercise of imagination. As Shapiro argues, “The ‘what’ of any knowledge system is radically entangled with the ‘how’ of its writing/speaking. This is especially essential in the administration of scarce resources. Thus, statements themselves are

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resources, politically resources or ‘assets’: “we view statements not on the basis of their truth value in communication but on the basis of their capacity for value creation in human relations”216

Rhetoric can mean appeal to the rational calculus of statistics; it can also mean an appeal to emotions. But the emotional has traditionally been marginalized as a potentially dangerous human faculty that traps individuals in the “cave” of misleading representations about the world. Philosophers like Plato, Kant or Hegel regarded instincts as uncontrollably threatening the moral order of society; others such as Aristotle or Hume understood the power of emotions for the political arena. Emotions are capable of affecting the minds and the conduct of people, and thus critical faculties of knowledge. But the historical war of attrition between “passions” and “reason” has never been halted; the mainstream state-centric realpolitik conveniently employs rational calculus to legitimate action despite human emotional hardship. Emotions may be manipulated to dominate or persuade but also used to create loci of resistance and idioms of rebellion.

Moreover, identity, either individual or collective is laden with emotions, a component largely neglected in the study of movements despite the cultural turn. Emotions may be seen as bridges between individual and the social, personal inner feelings as well as externally imposed dispositions and experiences of ‘embodied sociality.’217 An analysis of the “emotional economy” of a movement is, thus, an important endeavor that goes beyond the description of what may appear as mere longing for mythical times and may stem from loss of social anchorage and

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disintegration. These are prominent features of post-communist societies and of the Rosia Montana as well.

The leitmotif of ‘facts’ (as opposed to opinions, beliefs or emotions) has been used by RMGC as one general tool to discredit the opposition to the project as we have seen in a previous chapter. Whether it was about the ‘true story’ and the ‘facts’ about the situation of the area or about the nature of the arguments or the ethnicity of the opponents, the corporation has been articulating the narrative of modernity to discredit not only a certain target group but the mindset of centuries inscribed in the culture of the area, a culture whose luggage of emotional attachments (to nature and mountains) and archaic superstitions are to be devalued and stigmatized. While the ‘real’ story of the corporate project has been many times articulated in the modern language of scientific and technologies discourse, one that is obviously the appanage of a few, the choice to take a stance out of other beliefs and emotional attachments has been considered not only anachronistic and hilarious but also dangerous.

The corporation’s attitude towards cultural traditional aspects is of minimizing their relevance, devaluing this type of ‘emotional’ anachronistic opposition. But local knowledge is for many a non-modern intuitional form of knowledge. Supra-natural and transcendental appeals to forces of divine nature are frequent. Potential threats are reacted against with mysticism as Zeno Cornea told me, „Our gold is protected by God: He does not let anyone take more than He wants”. Artistic expressions talk of the political precisely by distancing from politics. 218 There is one person in the village who is especially admired and praised for artistically uttering these sacred meanings: Ioan Ciura, the poet of Rosia Montana, offered me his main poems such as:

The Temple

God gave us the Temple,  
For thousands of years,  
And not the way Gold wants,  
To crucify Mocani.  
The gold is ours and of the country’s,  
It is from God,  
And with our Ardeal,  
You want to move it on a different land?  
Cursed are the Sellers,  
For shining themselves in money,  
To forget about our country,  
And to crucify Mocani.  
But Europe will not let you,  
Mock us this way  
Make us a different Home...

There is much text in the ‘aesthetics of resistance’ about the past, about ancestral heroes and values, and as such, the past is viewed with emotional attachment. This is important to emphasize especially in the context of the prevalent discourse of the ‘new’ and the general necessity of ‘transition’ to the new while devaluing the past as a ‘dangerous return’. The instability and break-ups of post-Cold war life made the appeal to traditional beliefs a refugee. As Appadurai argues, the past is “not a land to return to in a simple politics of memory. It has become a synchronic warehouse of cultural scenarios, a kind of temporal central casting”

But the invocation of the past is not the habit of the opposition only. In the past we also locate much of the corporate discourse not only when idealizing mining (as the traditional occupation of the area, which Rosienii should not only celebrate but defend) but also when reinforcing nationalistic tendencies. On the one hand, resistance promoted and advocated by the Alburnus Maior organization and its NGO network of supporters is suspected of Hungarian ‘spying’: “Something is fishy here…too much delay of the project. How can a Hungarians stop the project? Are we during the Habsburg Empire?” On the other hand, there are Rosieni who sometimes humorously say: So what; maybe Hungary should just take Transylvania and get this

over with! Hell with Romania” The so-called ‘ethnic nationalism’ (as a historically salient feature of Romanians, an ‘abnormality’ that should be ‘treated’ with neoliberal cosmopolitanism) seems much more ambiguous when looked at in everyday conversation of Rosienii. There are scenes and images I witnessed that undermine the verbalized self-understanding of the interlocutors, the stories they express and the stories they think they are in, making any judgments about “facts” unstable. There is no unambiguous allegiance and no unambiguous resistance. Surely what some would call lack of patriotism (in the context of a national aversion to Hungarian ‘demands’ to Transylvania) is actually the reverse of the same coin of nationalism. In other words, ‘representatives’ (people pretending prizes for patriotic feelings) are not ‘representatives’ if they can hardly pay attention to their own stigma in producing patriotism.

As Maria Todorova is writing about the discourse of the “Turkish yoke” as a reminder of a history of foreign occupation, the question is: when is this knowledge informed by the emotive component which makes it inflammable? It is naive to think that this happens only when crafty and nasty politicians decide to manipulate the “innocent” and “simple-minded” people. This type of discourse has always existed in any nation-state as a potential “call to arms” and modern (geo)politicians have always (re)produced the language of nationhood and sovereignty to their electoral advantage. But how is it that this discourse comes to be resuscitated in a particular time and not another? How come people internalize a nation and make it an everyday “mental property”? 

Identity politics can be seen as a form of social control and of political mobilization. Also in the case of the Rosia Montana movement, we found the evidence of an everyday mental property of locality, of ethnicity, or family and ancestors, of land and goods, of traditions and lifestyles. This “property”, that is ‘not for sale’ gives the opponents the strength to continue their
resistance. In the modern geopolitical discourse, national identity is the most important political belief while the political culture of a nation is a map of geo(emotional) traits that create boundaries.\textsuperscript{220} (Re)production of essentialized identities and spaces is both the artistry of politicians in search for power but also the imagination of people in defense of ‘primordia’ no matter how ambiguously “invented” this may be. But to say that ‘identity’ ‘political culture’ or patriotism are settled and absolute feelings is exaggerated.

The cognitive and emotional uncertainty can also be generalized to the entire country, with more and more citizens wishing to immigrate especially in the context of this new economic crisis that seems to only be a continuation of decades of distress. If the opposition finds temporary joy and some empowerment in blocking the corporate project for 10 years (as Morghi said, “I like to see them angry because we stood up”), the macro-political problem of a perpetual threat to life-style and livelihood is still troubling. The widespread confusion of Rosienii often makes them put their previous routines on-hold (like house repairs or other investments), live everyday waiting for something to happen. As one local said to me, ‘we are on stand-by and \textit{hurducati} (restless)”

Strangely enough since we are approaching the domain of affect here, their feeling may be compared with a deadness of feelings, a paralysis. But would ‘paralysis’, i.e. lack of movement, be an awkward word to describe especially something connected to a ‘movement of resistance’? Or is the stand-by restlessness an illustration of the most intimate resistance illustrating the interconnectedness between power and resistance? As one local woman confessed

\textsuperscript{220} Carlo Bonura Jr., “Occulted Geopolitics of Nation and Culture: Situating political culture within the construction of geopolitical ontologies” in Simon Dalby, Gearóid Ó Tuathail (eds.) \textit{Rethinking Geopolitics}, (NY: Routledge, 1998).
to me, “I don’t do anything I just get on with my life’. As Zizek argued, “sometimes doing nothing is the most violent thing to do!”

With some exceptions, saying ‘I have the power to choose” (to sell or not to sell) rarely appears in conversations; the sense of agency numbed after years of deliberate presentation of the project as the only realistic imposition for the area. The paralysis may also be interpreted as an effect of the pervert hegemonic practice of the corporation: it is not just that the corporate project is a ‘must’, but one is ‘wrong’ to oppose it, ‘abnormal’ not to feel admiration for such an ‘environmentally friendly’ and ‘nationally beneficial’ opportunity. Even opponents sometimes doubt their own ‘normality’ in being against the corporation (although they abstain from articulating it directly during an interview). How can one make a living? This ontological call for survival may be interpreted as ‘self-colonizing’, a sort of ‘subaltern’ pragmatic conduct for adjustment without embrace. The “things that one cannot not want” (to use Spivak’s words) may very well refer to making money to feed one’s family.

The reproduction of labor power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same times, a reproduction of its submission to the ruling ideology of the workers, and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression, so that they, too, will provide for the domination of the ruling class ‘in and by words’.

Finally, the discussion about ‘homes’ and ‘emotions’ is also a discussion about ‘ontological security’ which can be as much an issue of ‘segmentary rigid lines’ or about ‘molecular fluxes’ and ‘lines of flight’ (in Deleuze’s terms). Deleuze will not give priority to

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any of these lines but be aware of the constant interplay among them in shaping lives. Humans desire ontological security; these may produce the fear of ‘freedom’ which is supposed to be the psychological root of any totalitarianism.

We are always afraid of losing. Our security, the great molar organization that sustains us, the arborescences we cling to, the binary machines that give us a well-defined status, the resonances we enter into, the system of overcoding that dominates us – we desire all that. (...) 225

However, the ‘cracks’ in the (symbolic) structural segments are the most interesting since they place you in the ‘middle’ or the ‘plateau’ of things. “what counts is not merely the two opposed camps (...) but the frontier, through which everything passes”. 226 Just as the decision to ‘sell or not to sell’ is a matter of assuring ‘security’ it is also a matter of looking for ‘freedom’. But ‘security’ is not merely the safeguarding of homes and ancestral lands; it can also be about securing a comfortable financial future. Moreover, freedom is not merely the possibility to ‘move’ out of the village but also the possibility to ‘stay’. For both ‘camps’ the ‘over-coding’ is articulated in more or less ‘hard’ terms and in both camps there is ‘loss’ of both security and freedom simultaneously.

Mobile subjectivities

One of the major conclusion I reached after the few trips in Rosia is that the prevalent feelings are of profound confusion (revealed through the repetitive ‘we don’t know what will happen’), powerlessness (‘what can we do?’) coupled with hopelessness (‘nobody cares!’); either

225 Deleuze, A thousand plateau, p.227.
siding with the corporation or with the NGO-supported opposition, Rosienii see themselves as unable to articulate one stable plan or desire for their future; they are lacking a linguistic formula to ascertain their sensibilities; there is no settled (intelligible) discourse for their feelings and contradictions and ambiguity prevail. Here is where we can argue for an invitation to read them aesthetically, as mobile subjectivities engaged in unstable events of subjectification.

One can argue that Rosia is planned to become another secured economic enclave abandoned by the national-state. Such enclavisation, while helping the formation of new global economic space, adds to the destruction of national economic spaces (already impoverished by years of communist industrialization) and implicitly to spreading the perception of a “wasted” land and of a ‘no-good people’: global-economy making can here be seen as nation-(economy) killing. In this relation, power is not merely repressive but also productive. This process does not only create marginalization and exclusion from the benefits of new spaces of globalization; it also creates new desires and often desperate claims for inclusion, recognition and assimilation into the new spaces.

While the state was perceived as ambiguously silent to the tragedy, many people internalized and reproduced the perception that Rosia is a forgotten space with no future. We often hear in Rosia “why Romanians are not good enough for their business?” There is an ambiguous mix of desire to contribute to the new spaces while also despising them. Self-displacement is however, associated with mixed feelings as the positive connotations of a ‘new modern beginning’ were overshadowed by “no other way” perception. The ironic twist of democracy within the neo-liberal capitalist economic system nowadays is that it disempowers both the state and the citizens and makes traumas of deterritorialization look like “free-choice”.
The particular situation of the region – (semi) anarchical-capitalist, ambiguously liberal, socialist, and nationalist, or environmentally-oriented – makes its resistance to any platform claiming hegemony, mobile. The uncertainty of structural changes and the uncertainty of subjectification are mutually constitutive. The Rosia conflict is just as much a story of desired localization - in the sense of re-validation of local economies – as it is a story of hybridization and integration into the global flows. It may well be that re-invention and re-creation of the system lies in the exact crisis that these ambiguous transformations reflect. The everyday life stories showed us that identity is rather constituted through multiple ‘practices of the self’\(^\text{227}\) which are unstable. As Mbembe argues, because the time we live in is fractured, any essentialist identity is doomed; perhaps there is no post-communist identity either that could be labeled with one single category.

To what extent do we have control over your own subjectivity? What is the self in becoming? Who are ‘we’ but also how are ‘we’ situated in the world? Any epistemological closure and any ontological security produce both liberation and enslavement. Our existence – social, mental, physical - lacks consistency or unity, and it is nomadic and rhizomatic. That is why we have to be aware of and cautiously examine the ‘conditions of possibility’ for any ‘consistency’ or ‘unity’ for, as De Certeau argues “there must always be a death for there to be speech.”\(^\text{228}\) The fragility and uncertainty of any commitment to any of the camps or narratives is to be viewed aesthetically. Aesthetic movements do not favor one (ideological) camp or another. The exact openness (or lack of closure) or vacillation may be the case. Aesthetic judgment does not have a Left or Right political spectrum as it can go both ways creating new codes and signs.


\(^{228}\) Michel de Certeau, *Culture on the Plural* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 4-8.
Chapter V

The Aesthetic Subject of Post-communism

Resistance and Capitalist Democracy

There are workers even in the absence of a workers' movement, and their proletarian existence is still the main scandal of humanity. 229

I started to think about resistance early on in 2003 in the context of anti-alter movement of movements, a multitude of (dis)organized social actors warning about the imminent economic crisis and the urgency of imagining alternatives to corporate neo-liberal globalization. My own life in a (post)communist country tempted me to think, as other contemporary Eastern European intellectuals, that there is no such form of activism in this region. As mentioned in the introduction, there are only a few scholarly accounts that critically address the issue of resistance outside the Balkanist discourse. Tamas, for instance argues:

It is easy to see why there is no resistance to capitalism in Eastern Europe. Here capitalism was created by socialists; here, socialism means capitalism and vice versa. (...) capitalism in the East is so pure, purified and cleaned of the Stalinist-Leninist genocides, of coercion and omnipresent servitude. (...) The only resistance is pure nostalgia and passeiste. 230

However, I found illustrations of resistance in the complicated case of Rosia Montana, a space where the work of imagining alternatives has already started despite being inhibited by the communist past. The difficulties faced by social movements in the context of such inhibitions of

229 Gáspár Miklos Tamás in RedWine.
political economy veiled by Balkanism and the increasing disappointment about Western capitalist democracy are producing a tornado of feelings, the partitioning of which is contentious and the intelligibility of which is elusive.

This dissertation tried to show that there is more about resistance to be imagined in the Rosia *differend*; ambiguously seduced by various (past and present) ideologies, the love story between Rosieni and capitalist democracy is neither a ‘happy-end’ nor simply a tragic romance. Rosienii repeatedly said that life under communism was more peaceful and simple, pointing out to the crucial role the state should play in protecting its citizens from insecurities and threats such as communal destruction and social welfare. But the state is itself an object of ambivalence: resentment for abandoning its subject is entangled with desire for consideration. One common saying in Romania that I could hear during my trips to Rosia Montana was the following: ‘capitalists will finish what the communist could not’. I read this as a feeling of contempt for a state that cannot be extricated from the market logic anymore. There is tremendous anger among Romanians. Their seduction does not equal nor buy love.

To examine this ambiguous resistance to capitalism in post-communism, one could first look at the striking similarities between the two power regimes with regard to their impact on the situation of subaltern classes: the actual situation of peasants and workers is not essentially improved in the capitalist regime. Surely there is freedom of movement: but is the migrant self an authentic choice? The wandering of immigrants as ‘beggars’ in the streets of France, ‘seasonal unqualified workers’ harvesting strawberries in Spain or ‘flexible maids in Italy are
prevalent illustrations: “People here have been wearing the boots of communism on the road to
capitalism, the hegemony of which they are still to confront barefoot.”

Both regimes engage with modernization through uprooting of subaltern classes from
native spaces. As Shapiro argues “rather than seeking to extend the reach of the “we”, we
appropriate, often violently, the world of others – persons, animals, and landscapes – in a way
that allows the familiar discourses containing that ‘we’ to maintain their various economies.

This makes post-communism as ‘after communism’ a fake situation: communism as a ‘classless
society’ emancipating the productivity and labor process was never a reality in the Eastern bloc:
“We are still in full pre-communist age so to speak: a time before labor emancipation.”

Moreover, one of the tools of the modernizing uprooting was what we call, for the
specific geographical space of Eastern Europe, the Balkanist discourse, to which the communist
experience became just another ingredient: ‘we’ are all the more backward because ‘we’ ended
up on the wrong side of the Curtain. The ‘Yalta syndrome’ has become perhaps the most
powerful psychological symbol of Romanian mentality signifying distrust of the West, fear that
we might be betrayed again, that the Americans will not “save” us, that the Europeans do not
really care about us. The so-called communist regime was the product of such a betrayal
happening in 1945, and, once again, a reminder of powerlessness. The foundation of post-
communist transformation is the internalization and widespread fashion of Balkanism
negation of the past as shameful and essentially the (self) perception of inferiority.

Let us first proceed by looking at the importance of the ‘communist’ regime in analyzing
post-communist resistance to neo-liberal globalization; first of all, its legacies as fetishes, a

pp. 59-76, p. 75.
232 Shapiro, The Politics of Representation, p. 103.
233 Tamas, “Capitalism pure and simple”, p. 43.
keeping of the communist memory alive which negates it as a pathologic experiment assimilated to the Balkanist discourse. Second, as a reality and a project, the regime was not a local isolated phenomenon intrinsically destined for the Eastern part of Europe but a global historical and political event both as relevance and production mechanisms; understanding it and preserving its memory as a globally constructed experiment (and another cultural ‘otherness’ of the West) is crucial for any imagining of alternative politics.

Fetishes of the Past

A common practice of post-communist politics has been to repair, normalize and heal the (post)-communist subject who is again a ‘lost’ child of history. This child supposedly has to get away from past identity and wash away the ‘toxic dust’ of communism. This habituation of Balkanism - and the overall anti-communist crusade waged in a time when communism as a political regime is dead - can be seen as another form of ideological affirmation (through negation) of the present (neo)liberal regime: the prevailing themes after 1989 (transition, structural adjustments, EU accession, economic development etc.), mirror this affirmation through negation. The ghost of communism is kept alive and resuscitated by elites especially in moments of crisis to justify yet other ideological interventions of capitalist nature.

Communism is closed in a totalizing absolute frame, one of darkness and failure, separated from the ‘good’, ‘civilized’ and ‘efficient’ capitalist world through an ontological difference. This strange ideological ethical and economic line of thought hinders, fragments and makes impossible the development of an alternative to the passive acceptance of the global capitalist logic.

This is the nature of the anticommunist crusades that prevail in Romania and other parts of Eastern Europe. There is a vested interest of the power elites in Romania to over and over

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236 Tichindeleanu, “The Modernity of Post-communism”, p. 137
invoke the communist threat (as well as the entire cohort of Balkanist essentialised identities) especially at the moment when the capitalist system is in crisis.

The tendency is to dismiss the idea that the misdeeds of capitalism may simply be the misdeeds of capitalism - continuing, rather than fixing the communist wrongs. In objectifying and essentialising ‘incapacities’, the communist experience became yet another confirmation of the inferior status of this region, yet another ‘self’ that must denied in the constant struggle to become as the ‘other’, the civilized, the Western. These (Balkanist) interpretations consolidate our identity, which is an event, a construction or a projection, a reaction - but its contingent artificial substance and character is more than often forgotten given naturalization and habituation. The stereotyped discourse of Balkanism still lingers in the cultural, social and economic spheres of post-communist societies as a simplified form of representation and identification for the subject; as Buden argues, following Homi Bhabha’s similar interpretation of the post-colonial subject,

This discord of the (the colonial) subject is ongoing and would settle, stabilize or normalize only by connecting the cultural difference lived as a trauma, with something stable: the fetish. Even the extreme different beliefs that are mutually excluding can hereby ‘peacefully’ coexist in the disrupted subject.237

Buden makes a good point by showing how the Museums of Communism created in Eastern Europe after 1989 display a stereotyped image of communism which is nothing new from what one knew before entering them; the museum in Warsaw, for instance, displays two left boots to infer that the communist system could only offer something absurd, irrational and eventually impossible. Surely this would be viewed by many post-communist citizens as a blatant exaggeration or simplification, the disavowed truth of which is that they could even

237 Buden, “The Boots of Communism”, p. 62
‘parade on the streets walking in those ‘left’ boots for hours’\textsuperscript{238}. This stereotyped image is a ‘multiple and contradictory conviction which allows a knowing of the difference by both hiding and denying it’\textsuperscript{239} In this discourse, there is no room for inherited traumatic ambivalence of communism; therefore, Buden talks of “a post-communist impossibility to relate to this past.”

**An Inconvenient Other**

G.M. Tamas, for instance, talks about the similarities between the two regimes: the wage dependency, the inequalities, the exploitation, the hierarchies, to name a few broad ones. Surely private property and the invisible hand of the market are said to make the big difference; but the property of the State (apparatchiki) was also ‘private’ in the sense of separate, privileged, protected. As for the market – while offering an anonymous mechanism of resource allocation in contrast with the obvious hierarchical mechanism of the State – it also includes actors whose visible fist rather than invisible hand have fundamentally modeled it.

Another important observation Tamas makes is that of the ‘foreign soul’ of the radical revolutionaries that made the communist experiment possible: these were educated privileged people inhabiting ‘oasis’ of modernity in the deserts of feudal rural pauper and illiterate East of Europe. It was almost a modernizing rage of elites, urban intelighenzia or proletariat despising their own archaic roots. The communist passing was merely a brutal passing from the feudal caste to a class society (that consolidated especially after the Fall) and not a classless one.

Thousands of peasants were taken out of their ‘misery’ in this emancipator project, removed from their dependency to the land, prejudices and traditions. Building this enlightened society necessarily meant erasing these ‘natural’ connections. During communism, the concept

\textsuperscript{238} Buden, “The Boots of Communism”, p. 64  
\textsuperscript{239} Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 114.
of “wiping out the differences between rural and urban areas” led to the destruction of hundreds of villages in Romania. Up to 20,000 villages disappeared, giving way to agricultural-industrial complexes. And despite the fact that many Romanians have accepted the new urban life as a social promotion and there is a current widespread nostalgia for some of that life-style. In fact, the Bolshevik Revolution accomplished all the major goals of a bourgeois revolution: industrialism, secularism, education, infrastructure and, most importantly here, uprooting of peasants from homes to housing projects.

Only after 1989 the modern society based on classes and produced by the Bolshevik germinated into the post-communist working class which is, according to Tamas, merely another ‘subaltern’ class with no political and symbolic representation. Therefore, its ‘subaltern’ character may easily become a trigger for other emancipator experiments for the benefit of yet another power regime humiliating it as inferior.

The similarity with the current controversy in Rosia Montana is striking: living at the fragile border between proletariat and peasantry, Rosienii are fearful of becoming yet another ‘subaltern collective’ manipulated for some elitist projects. Many people in Romania in fact, perceive themselves at the border between a worker and a peasant; in Rosia, they are keeping alive many of the life-style features of a farmer while being proud of getting a miner’s pension or a job in the mine or elsewhere in a factory. Their confusion is aggravated by the conversion of local nomenklatura to the virtuous neo-liberalism which meant the consolidation of elite privileges, a black market and an economy based on legalized theft with support from international institutions. The ‘new Europe’ of Rosia Montana is not about developing the practice of democracy but gaining the formal result to produce the desired economic liberal order and exchanges even at the expense of a country’s economic interests.

240 Tom Gallagher, Theft of a Nation, Romania since Communism, (Londra: Hurst & Company, 2005).
These seemed to be the interpretations that many Rosienii gave to the RMGC project: confused about the actual benefits of the mine, many Rosienii wander between inner acceptance and rejection of yet another imposition to change, to become ‘better’, to civilize: ‘They (the corporation) think we are mountain people, that is, we do not think, we should be told what to do’, confesses a local man in Rosia. How can one think of these ‘classes’ of proletarians? How is resistance to the new regime nurtured by these ‘new’ classes?

At the level of subjective intimate memories, loyalty to any of the two systems has been fragile and their similarities in terms of impacts on everyday life of ‘subaltern’ classes makes ‘resistance’ - as a novel attitude of opposition to new threats - almost a non-sense or redundant after the ’89 revolution. There is a prevailing feeling that people in 1989 died for a positive change but on the contrary, there is more stress and more insecurity.

As some of the Rosieni declare, the context of hardship is understandable considering the nature of the capitalist system itself, as the ‘toughest stage of humanity’; the former communist elites are being in a position to take advantage of this system while not deserving the ‘merit’ of creating it alone. In other words, Rosienii do understand what the newly ‘anti-communists’ capitalists wish to hide, “that what they are denouncing as perverted pseudo-capitalism simply is capitalism.” In other words, the stories of the Rosienii remind us of Zizek’s invitation: “perhaps the disappointment at capitalism in the post-Communist countries should not be dismissed as a simple sign of the “immature” expectations of the people who didn’t possess a realistic image of capitalism”.

Despite this common perception, there is a widespread moralizing tendency of mainstream intellectuals that hints to a form of capitalist nationalism in lamenting about how ‘we

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242 Zizek, “20 Years of Collapse”.
could not create a form of real capitalism but only primitive accumulation’, ‘our capitalism is corrupted and deformed’. The underlining idea is that, following Weber, only the Western rational type of capitalism is the real one that could sustain welfare and development while ‘political’ and ‘Balkanic’ capitalism (of the type Eastern Europe is perpetuating) could only increase disparities and injustices. For example, Zoe Petre talks about a ‘perestroika’ type of capitalism that continued the ‘phylum’ of nepotism nurtured by Ceausescu’s urbanization where the party apparatus was a big family reunion.243 Or Stoica argues that

The spirit of post-communist capitalism is opposed to the rational Western capitalism; many of the post-communist capitalists have a short-term mentality seeking immediate and large profits. (…) Post-communist capitalist succeeded only under a situation of economic protectionism and monopoly. (…) In the absence of the state and the generous contracts it offers, many of these would not even exist.244

Somehow strikes me as hilarious to believe the many normative ideas these mainstream authors disseminate. First, that there should be a ‘native’ form of capitalism Romania could have produced. Second, that the native capitalism should have imitated the ‘protestant ethics’ of capitalism and not follow our ‘Balkanic nature’; Third, that the State should have protected and facilitated the emergence of this form of real capitalism and not the corrupt one. Whether capitalism could have been different (less corrupt, more fair) is extremely problematic given the recognizable misdeeds of Western capitalism itself, past and present. As Barbu mentioned:

Only a maximum equity of the political and administrative operation would convince the citizens that privatization does not only mean the corrupt passing of public capital to private people but it can be one that underpins development and a best possible social redistribution and prosperity.245

Living the communist experience for 50 years naturally seemed to require living its (only known) alternative: capitalist democracy. One could not imagine ‘alternatives’ since one had the capitalism system to adjust to while simply forgetting one’s past. While during communism the post-socialist citizen had an entire world to confirm the ‘normality’ of his/her aversion to the (brutality) of communism, nowadays the hegemony of the capitalist system leaves little room for questioning. A global tolerance about the misdeeds of capitalism makes Rosieni’s ambivalence about it a discomforting inner feeling. How can one feel about these?

The Dialectic of Subaltern Resistance

Everything is dangerous…The ethical political choice we have to make every day is to determine which, is the main danger.\(^\text{246}\)

According to Tamas, the ‘new class of proletarians’ do not have control over their own life; plus, “Today when the majority is the working class, the working class means nothing”\(^\text{247}\). The observation seems to be supported by many of the declarations of Rosienii in Rosia: many Rosienii complained to me that ‘nobody cares’ and mass-media ignores them. Their perception is that nobody really defends their interests; they feel lost and disoriented, surviving rather than living. Even their labor power does not have a strong weight in the face of corporate plans of highly-technological extraction procedures. Even the promise of jobs is suspected given the hiring of non-local experts; Rosienii ask themselves: why aren’t we good enough for their jobs

\(^{246}\) Jenny Edkins, Poststructuralism and International Relations: Bringing the Political Back In (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers: 1999), p. 57.

\(^{247}\) Tamas, “Capitalism pure and simple”, p. 28.
anyway?’ Their peasant habits (raising caws and cultivating the land) are all the more a subject of sarcasm.

In the framing of the local inhabitants of Rosia often times there is indication of a pristine farming community: “many are farmers whose sole occupation is agriculture and they refuse to leave their lands”248 On the other hand, the corporation is framing the inhabitants as miners-workers: buildings in Rosia display posters conveying the message that Rosia Montana exists because of mining and that the community could not live otherwise. However, Rosienii often question any such ‘strategic’ representation. The appeal to ‘peasant identity’ is often met with discomfort as an attack or as a suspect form of empowerment that frightens – ‘we are not really peasants, we are workers’, we don’t know anything else than mining’. These insecurities are hard to bear especially in the context of no hope for a future alternative; the new generations are said to be born ‘losers’ in a world that constantly demands for updating. The strong pressure to reset oneself after the communist experience is a stressful one. How can one oppose what almost appears as an ‘inner enemy’?

The discussions with Rosienii also reveal the need to go beyond these binaries, as none provides ‘the real’ version, as no such ‘real version’ exists outside an imagined project. Repressing this ambiguity for the sake of embracing a ‘clean’ future of capitalist nature creates a gradual process of erasing collective memory as a site of reflection and resistance something that has a crucial importance ‘today when the forces of globalization are smoothing over Europe’s industrial wasteland.’249 Faced with flashes of nostalgia for communism and patriotism, one could even worry about this burst of apparent ideological abnormality. As Rosienii confess subjective perception and experience tells them things that are officially condemned such as that

248 Cited in Popescu Formula As 2002
249 Charity Scribner, Requiem for Communism, (Londra: Cambridge, 2003), p. 4
‘communism brought them some good’ or that ‘home is something one should protect’. As Ivailo Ditchev argues:

It is a means to resist the foreign cultural order which almost erased the country from the face of the earth in the last seventeen years. Socialism was the last stage when producers founded or were forced to think that it is a good idea to give Bulgarian names to their products before everything became Milka or Coke. Consuming these retro-products that emerged on the market one satisfies one’s hunger for identity. (…). this nationalism is the symptom of a severe illness.  

This ‘illness’ is for Ditchev the lost faith that even the EU could make a difference for bettering the lot of these people: instead of protecting them from the strikes of globalization, the EU practices almost became another post-Cold War form of political occupation. The Westerners are again seen as accomplice to native destruction, playing the game of ‘permissive liberalism’ with regard to the robbing of the country’s resources and the hijacking of traditional life-styles by local and foreign elites:

The more the West allows that its support be hijacked by the many crooks of privatization (governmental ministers, civil servants, directors of various services in the Ministries and their regional agencies, bank directors, factory directors, judges, police-men, military-men) the more it becomes the target of ambiguous sentiments of hate and fascination, resentment and attraction, repulsion and enchantment.

**Unstable Subjectification**

For many young people educated in the communist system, being part of the propaganda machine was an amazing time for joy and play as well as a reason for pride to be part of the project whose universal goal was to promote peace and prosperity. Personal life was almost exclusively ‘political’ and for a long time, there was something strongly (manufactured) to believe in, giving a sense of meaning and value to the lives of many, a sort of cultural and

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251 Claude Karnoukh, “Towards the Third World or the March of Late Modernity in Eastern Europe”, in Adrian T. Sarbu & Alexandru Polgar (eds.), *Genealogies of post-communism*, pp. 77-117, p. 87
national dignity. The drift of the Fall has not necessarily fill the gap in terms of meaning-making, the ‘hole’ in the national flag. All sorts of meaning-making machines were born – from consumerist fashions to religious fervor or other esoteric refuges. We often hear ‘nothing has value anymore, neither money nor our work’ and we can understand that in the ‘ruins of politics’, culture, as a yardstick ensuring certain valuables remaining ‘singular’, lost some of its power. Lacking such guidance, commoditization has increasingly become pervasive.

In a commercialized, heterogeneous and liberal society, the public culture defers most of the time to pluralism and relativism and provides no firm guidance, while the only lesson the economy can teach is that of the freedom and dynamism that ever-wider commoditization clearly brings with it.

The ideological premises for commoditization suffused the public discourse hungry for such shifts. Happily consuming foreign valuables, post-communist citizens mostly ignored consuming own valuables, somewhat becoming minor losses in the spheres of exchange economy. The ‘shame’ of converting downwards ‘singular’ values previously ruled by a specific kind of morality was covered with the mantra of the ‘invisible hand’: a frequent public feeling expressed as ‘we sold our country’ was stigmatized as extremist or at least, naïve of the kind the ‘subaltern’ uneducated masses produce, in their incapacity to understand how economy works.

The post-socialist subject, as the Rosia case revealed, is
docile to the transitory, (...) target to certain commercials, caught in the continuous present full of contradictory assertions, all the more confusing since today you do one thing and tomorrow another one without a connection or a logic other buying.

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253 Claude Karnoouh, “Towards the Third World or the March of Late Modernity in Eastern Europe”, in Adrian T. Sarbu & Alexandru Polgar (eds.), Genealogies of post-communism. p. 92
If the 1990s’s reaction of Rosieni to the corporation was of strong suspicion with regard to its capacity to build the new economy – a space of economic regimentation - gradually the Rosienii realized that what the corporation managed to do was precisely to gain its (global) credentials for this job; the Rosienii seemed to have understood (sometimes as a fatality) that while the state withdrawn as a (capable) provider and creator of such an economic space, the corporation, despite increased insecurity, was being pushed as the only new ‘planner’ of the future ‘cincinal’ (five-years plan). Pressuring the state to ‘come into its senses’ appears as hilarious – maybe some elements of this state apparatus have been co-opted sometimes to support the blockage of corporate advancement - and this was a temporary confirmation of success in using the ‘opportunity structure’; but in terms of material production the concreteness of an economic alternative is yet to come as the state constantly laments (financial) impotence.

Therefore, for many of the post-communist citizens became more and more obvious that there is ‘nothing to believe in anymore’ in terms of politics, no left and right, no parties to distinguish, no one to vote for. As Rosienii in Rosia Montana mention, ‘the state is silent’. Its noise has mostly been a parade for projects of personal interests. Therefore, ‘not destined’ to take charge of public life, the large majority initially involved in ‘subaltern resistance’ preferred the alienation of valuables accepting commoditization, the new legitimized ‘exchange of sacrifices’. These processes are converting personal worth and valuables into exchange value while the only equality has become the commercial equality: you have the right to sell or not to sell.

The fortune of Moti’s resources actually augmented their marginality in the cycle of capital economy; invited to lose themselves in the mass of invisible consumers (move somewhere else and become just another part of the mass of depoliticized subjects), few of them
choose, however, to become the inconvenient visible ‘others’. The ambiguous drama was whether to accept the dominant value of ‘self realization’ or challenge this as an illusion. The remaining obstinate are sometimes seen as ‘heroes’ of admirable force but also as manipulated, strange and suspect, or naïve and idealistic. The prevailing feeling among the Rosienii of Rosia Montana is that of insignificancy and marginalization: ‘the press doesn’t even write about us, we are lost here in the mountains’, says one local to me.

Despite prevailing anticommunist and anti-nationalist crusades meant to legitimize neoliberalism, personal memories blend outside a moralizing ideological frame, a history of subjective transformation and embrace, incomplete take-over of ‘habits of the heart’. It is as if one would say: ‘yes, we tried that potion and we tried this potion but we are still not convinced by any…”. “E democratie! (It’s democracy!)” seems to be a common explanation for all the things that have changed and affected the lives of the post-communist citizen, a feeling that everybody is doing what he or she pleases while the consequences are uncontrollable nurturing a kind of democratic disorder.

Resistance is ambiguous because it is not mere rejection or acceptance of neither communism nor capitalism or any other labels: between the lines of this ambivalence once can read that there is no final or absolute naturalization of any such discourse. Resistance is ambiguous because it comes from a life of confusion and uncertainty, incoherence and absurdity which can be tiring, painful and nerve-racking. Although the various ‘isms’ (nationalism, communism etc.) may be invoked, they can also be easily ridiculed without the fear of looking contradictory, in private conversations or over a glass of wine.

Deprived of the happy-end (or even beginning) of capitalism, shocked by its similarities with communist, it is the exhausting experience of living with a fetish that resistance faces. This
subjective ambivalence brings contradiction into a discursive space (that of post-communism) which desired no contradiction; there is no instrumental value to having doubts, because ‘time is money’, that is, in the Rosia case, the corporation might not buy (the land) anymore and one can be left out without (both) money and home/land if the project will be politically labeled as ‘public utility’; the corporate supporters find it difficult to understand how can some people have doubts over production/profit/job making and are pressuring the political elites to impose the project as a ‘national necessity’.

The ‘post-communist self’ is, therefore, living a dialectic experience, living at the border of two worlds, both abounding of contradictions: the city world of the more young generation which is more tempted to settle for the (even insecure) wage-earning but also periodically returning to their ‘peasant land’ for goods. They would sell their land more easily even for the short-term benefit of paying their debts or buying a more comfortable city-life. The other world is the rural world of isolation and growing deprivation: these are the many mothers and grandmothers of the city proletariat who are terrified of the lack of means to crop their land, or of a potential rupture with their land, feeling useless for the country seemed to have minimized their value, both fascinated by the comfort of their children’s city-life and scared of their instability and lack of sustainability in terms of livelihoods as wage-earners. It is no surprise that balancing in-between these two worlds, the subsistence economy is still predominant in Romania. One can talk of predominant dualities that torn apart the post-communist subject.

In the critique of Balkanism, the Balkans gain specificity by virtue of this liminal status, of being neither here nor there, but in two places at the same time. (...) The intense internal polarities created by Balkanism’s binary logic (Christianity/Islam, civilization/barbarism, etc.) infuses any reality imposed upon the Balkans by Balkanism with pernicious instability.²⁵⁴

How are these interests/desires of Rosieni an object of representation and reproduction? What ‘families’ of cognitive phrases do they represent? Who is the plaintiff(s) in this differend? It becomes clearer that these are not just ‘persons’ but rather genres of discourse, ‘regimens of power’, or narratives arguing over the arrest of the meanings/essence/uses of ideas such as property, labor power, nature, prosperity or capital as well as over the registers of affects to be mobilized in this contest. These ideas, however, are humanity’s unsettled ‘differends’ which could not find a ‘last phrase’ given the lack of an universal judge:

This state is signaled by what one ordinarily calls a feeling: “One cannot find the words.” etc. A lot of searching must be done to find new rules for forming and linking phrases that are able to express the differend disclosed by the feeling, unless one wants this differend to be smothered right away in a litigation and for the alarm sounded by the feeling to have been useless.\(^{255}\)

This ‘alarm’ Lyotard mentions is a crucial moment, the suspended moment of non-judgment, non-decision, indeterminacy, a resistance to the settling of subjectification. Finding a new idiom to settle this *differend* would require imagining/creating an ‘alternative’ predicated on the multiplicity of disordered subjects and spaces. The aesthetic reveals this situation of fractured interpretations of what is meaningful and valuable. The cradle of resistance lies precisely in the overall indeterminacy and elusiveness of any unified or homogenous consciousness: the ongoing tension and hesitation between change and preservation, between selling and preserving, between accepting and rejecting. These attitudes are to be seen aesthetically because they deny certainty.

Questioning the ‘abnormality’ of ambiguity is an important step in removing the Balkanist prevalence and clearing the way for a more elaborate approach of resistance politics in

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the Balkans. This ambiguity, seen as merely a ‘dangerous incompleteness’ on the drawbridge towards the ideal capitalist society, may offer other venues for political understandings. It may be this exact “handicap” of heterogeneity and ambiguity that triggers resistance to the hegemony of Western capitalism, destabilizing it while simultaneously reinforcing it.

This aesthetic space is, by its nature, incompatible with domination as it often stands outside the realm of the ‘politically relevant’. It is in this space of culture that hybridization becomes relevant as a micro-practice: neither one thing nor the other, neither communist nor capitalist both before and after the Fall of the Wall. The unreliable commitment of the East of Europe to prevailing regimes of power can be seen as a drifting sand of any hegemonic platform.

Without a sense of certainty, individuals as the Rosienii of Rosia can be political in an open and critical sense of subjecthood and not mere ideological, in any programmatic sense, thus, remaining open rather than producing closure. We, therefore, argue that an important insight for (resistance) politics is to see that “subjects are best understood not as static entities (…) but as beings with multiple possibilities for becoming”\(^{257}\). A disorganized multiplicity of voices, Rosienii resist a singular arrest of their ‘truths’, revealing the cracks of hegemony engendered by their indetermination.

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\(^{257}\) Shapiro, *Cinematic Geopolitics*, p. 8
Summary and conclusion

In 2002 when I was an undergraduate student I was intrigued to see on TV the many youngsters in the West breaking the windows of Starbucks. I did not know how to feel about these people that were criticizing the exact values Romanians had been willing to die for in 1989. Growing up after the Fall of communism I was educated to believe that capitalism and liberal democracy are the models to be followed and any criticism against these seemed shameful and ridiculous if not dangerous. Therefore, my work has thus been an attempt to find some answers to the following question: how does one articulate resistance to neoliberal globalization in a post-communist context where major concepts such as democracy, capitalism or socialism are already taken for granted?

At the time I was asking this question, one major movement was emerging in Romania that placed the issue on the public agenda: the Save Rosia Montana movement. A semi-urban village, Rosia Montana is the oldest documented locality of Romania whose gold reserves have been an attraction since ancient times. In 1997, the Romanian government granted the right to explore its land to Euro-Gold Corporation while the terms of the contract were classified. Soon after, the government also declared Rosia a disadvantaged ‘mono-industrial’ area which meant that no other profit-making activity could be developed while the corporation enjoys 10 years of tax-break. The corporate project was the development of the largest cyanide open cast mine in Europe. Suspicious about this intention, in 2000 around 400 families from the area formed an NGO called Alburnus Maior. For them, the mine meant relocation of 910 households, displacement of about 2,000 people, destruction of 9 cemeteries, 8 churches, 4 mountains and patrimonial buildings (such as the famous Roman Galleries). In the last ten years Alburnus Maior supported by a coalition of national and international NGOs insisted in asking for
alternatives. In the same time, around 80% of the Rosieni sold their properties (partially or entirely) to the Corporation. Events are still unfolding; one the one hand, in the context of the economic crisis, the government is supporting the project as beneficial for the economy. On the other hands, the opposition is campaigning for the inclusion of Rosia in the UNESCO World Heritage.

In my dissertation I argue that Rosia there is no one single way to ‘name’ a ‘true’ Rosia Montana or its allegiances and resistances. Looking at these narratives has not been about recovering some deeper meaning but about revealing the different discourses trying to arrest the experience of Rosieni and limit their discursive spaces. First, the corporation invites us to ‘learn the True Story’ about Rosia as a ‘troubled’, ‘poor’ and ‘backward’ place in need of modern upgrading, left outside the market benefits because of communists, nationalists and now, the ‘new enemies of modernization’, the ecologists: the corporation has, capitalized from emphasizing ‘inhibitions’ of political economy: widespread feelings of embarrassment of being associated with these ideologies as dangerous, a denial of the right to nostalgia for the past and an obsession with the Stranger. I argue that these ‘inhibitions’ are contributing to a consolidation of the Balkanist discourse, as an instrument for neo-liberal advancement. Masked in the guise of caring, curing, educating and motivating, the corporation has promoted itself as the ‘only alternative’.

Second, the ‘Save Rosia Montana’ campaign as a counter-narrative, has transformed the ‘job’ of resistance into a professional one, carried out by an entire cohort of NGOs and activists who are also attempting to ‘speak for the Rosieni’ and ‘save’ them from their enemies. This emerged as one of the largest movements in Romania, an alliance of over 30 organizations/institutions that managed to block the corporation for ten years by raising
awareness in demonstrations/festivals and other public actions and by suing the corporation. The campaign invites us to view Rosia in many different ways and enjoy its values: music, poetry, theater, sports, civic engagement, and joy. However, the inner tensions and contradictions of this movement are relevant for analyzing the ambiguity of resistance. What keeps them together in the common campaigns against the corporation is a form of ‘strategic essentialism’ no more important than what drives them apart, a dissensus over values and tactics, or future paths.

The third narrative is slightly separate from (but often overlapping) the campaign is projecting the ‘sacredness’ of Rosia Montana emphasizing the spiritual connection of the Rosieni with the land, homes, mountains, echoing themes of patriotism, Christian faith as well as ecology. The ‘desire’ for ontological and epistemic certitudes such as God, Spirits, Souls, Nation, Mountains motivates the idea that certain things are not ‘for sale’, Rosienii historicize their relation Rosia and place their subjection to the nation into the context of major events of domination such as the Roman, the Austro-Hungarian and the communist, the violence of which is, however, minor compared to the corporate project.

The interplay of these three narratives has produced disintegration and conflicts not only within the region but within families and selves, disrupted and unstable subjectivities at the crossroad of Romania’s capitalist development. Despite the seduction exercised by each of these representations, Rosia reveals an ambiguous feeling(scape) and the ‘partition of the sensible’ is contentious. It is close to impossible to quantify how many Rosieni or who exactly is for/against the corporation. If the first years of the Campaign were marked by the dualism ‘us against them’ where the ‘traitors’ were those who sold and the ‘real rosieni’ were those who refuse commodification, these binaries have gradually lost strength. Selling land does not always equal supporting the corporation; preserving land does not necessarily mirror resistance. Self-
displacement has often been associated with mixed feelings as the positive connotations of a ‘new modern beginning’ have been overshadowed by the “no other way” perception. Content goes hand in hand with disappointment; so goes agreement with disagreement, seduction and contempt. Because of the strenuous search for a ‘real’ supporter, a ‘real’ enemy or a ‘real’ representative, people in Rosia find it hard to wake up each morning in the last ten years knowing their lives are uncertain.

In Romania one can frequently hear: ‘We will be the new slaves, we will sell our country and ourselves, the capitalists will finish what the communists started’. On the one hand, ideological and political propaganda of the corporation has here found the right ‘seeds’ to grow co-option into the fantasy of prosperity. Proletarization would now be finalized and dependence on the ‘slave-wage’ and on credit would be established as the new economic reality. This seems beyond control and many Rosieni internalize it as inescapable. Here, ideology is not mere ‘false consciousness’, but a function necessary for individual adaptation. On the other hand, the success of the (green) movement in Rosia so far has also been a result of its complicity to and interplay with the logic of commoditization that it condemns, producing (and selling) new forms of guilt, exclusions, dependencies, and anxieties by making distinctions between moral/immoral, traitor/supporter, friend/foe. The movement promotes a ‘brand of Rosia’, as one leader called it, a brand that was made possible through a rupture in habitual life and re-invention of other identities such as NGO coordinators, touristic guides, artists. But the campaign is controversial as it presents a ‘taken-for-granted’ alternative to the corporate project in pursuit of the possibility for ‘another world’: projects such as agro-tourism, or eco-tourism or eco-farming satisfy the imaginary future projections of some while excluding others.
Although the various ‘isms’ may be invoked, they can also be easily ridiculed without the fear of looking contradictory, in private conversations or over a glass of wine. There are scenes and images I witnessed that undermine the verbalized self-understanding, the stories Rosienii express and the stories they think they are in, making any judgment about facts and feelings unstable. For example as my host Lucretia used to say, “One morning I say ‘to hell with them’; the next day I think of selling”; her sadness about potential abandonment/displacement was mixed with joy about showing a visitor her home, cattle and garden, accompanied by the request to tell the world about it. This subjective ambivalence brings contradiction into a discursive space (that of post-communism) which desired no contradiction. Rosienii are resisting the fixity of power regimes by discovering conflicting ‘truths’ about themselves. The differend is visible in the personal stories about ambiguities of everyday life. Despite attempts to transform it into a multitude of litigations over objects of cognition subjected to the protocol of economics or law, ‘truths’ about Rosia are still to be imagined.

Resistance is ambiguous because it is not mere rejection or acceptance of neither communism nor capitalism or any other labels: there is no final or absolute naturalization of any such discourse. Resistance is ambiguous because it comes from a life of confusion and uncertainty, incoherence and absurdity which can be tiring, painful and nerve-racking. This makes Rosieni their routines on-hold, live everyday waiting for something to happen, asking themselves ‘how should we feel about this?’ Rosienii see themselves as unable to articulate a plan or a desire for the future; lacking a linguistic formula to ascertain sensibilities, there is no settled (intelligible) discourse: ‘we are on stand-by and restless’, ‘we don’t know what to think and feel/what can we do?’ In a sense, their situation may be compared with a feeling of deadness, a paralysis which in the end practically equals a refusal to be fully co-opted (or ‘fall in
love”) with any of the narratives of ‘salvation’. As some say, ‘I don’t do anything I just get on with my life’; I’m not an activist” Understanding the deadlock of binary confrontations, Rosienii often express a desire to exit these games and pause, alerting that one can say ‘I don’t know’ and question the regimentation of any homogenous projections that may (temporarily and fragmentarily) make right by fighting ‘wrong’.

Human consciousness may be the host of multiple ideologies interacting and competing for meaning-making and practice-development; one more reason to see the aesthetic ambivalence of the everyday subject. An aesthetic approach to resistance requires a suspension of judgment and of accusations that can consume us, an awareness of partialities of truths, making choices out of distinctions and reflective detachments or strategic disengagements, a joy of imagining and inventing.

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