To Sell or Not to Sell: Landscapes of Resistance to Neoliberal Globalization in Transylvania

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ABSTRACT   *What can resistance to corporate globalization mean for post-socialist citizens? This article examines the case of Rosia Montana in Transylvania to answer this question. One of the mining places in Transylvania that sits on gold and other metals, Rosia is a semi-urban village and the oldest documented community in Romania. After 1989, its resources made it appealing to a mining corporation interested in developing the largest open-cast cyanide leach gold mine in Europe. This article makes an analysis of personal stories of resistance to the corporate mining project addressing global developmentalism from a critical perspective. Stories testify that both national feelings of rootedness (cultural struggle) and the support for corporate mining are not forms of ideological engagement manipulated towards some programmatic ends. It may be the in-between space occupied by former communist countries where the Western liberal discourse is not yet naturalized, the space where a test of capitalism is taken. The ambiguity and vacillation of locals with regard to the market space is a micro-political formulation of a macro-political tension between 'culture' and 'politics' that allows for criticism to emerge through aesthetic avoidance of ideological closure and indeterminacy.*

Keywords: neoliberal globalization, resistance, ambiguity, post-communism

Introduction

Traveling to Rosia Montana by bus, I overheard discussions that intrigued me: 'we will sell our country . . . we will be the new slaves.' Although former communist countries like Romania do not share the (anti)colonial discourse of 'Third World' countries, I started to think about what prompts these comparisons. Different 'yokes' have been historically invoked to shape the national narrative about the continuous alien threats to Romanian land and resources. Rosia Montana is seen as another illustration of such a threat: one of the mining sites in Transylvania that sits on gold and other metal deposits, it is a semi-urban village and the oldest documented community in Romania. Its gold treasure has been an attraction since ancient times, when the Daci, ancestors of the Romanians, were producing jewelry for European empires. The history of gold exploitation

has also been described as a history of hardship for the miners, be they ancient slaves (prisoners of wars), feudal '*iobagi*' (servants), workers, or private entrepreneurs. After centuries of exploitation, gold is still prospected in the bowels of Transylvanian earth. To no one's surprise it became appealing to foreign investment after the communist collapse: a Canadian corporation wishes to develop in Rosia one of the largest open-cast cyanide leach gold mines in Europe. Thus, the global relevance of this Transylvanian village of 'Rosia Montana' became public.

Although one might assume that its rich resources would give it a commanding position, the village's public image has been constructed as a 'problem' to be solved through modern 'developmental' interventions. According to the Canadian corporation, Rosia's 'problem' is its 'backward' poor status, lacking modern facilities and infrastructure. The displacement of over 800 local families was presented not only as inevitable but also as beneficial. In the context of the well-known desire of post-socialist citizens to embrace Western living standards, this 'problem' has been internalized and perpetuated by many of the inhabitants themselves who sold their land and left. However, opposition to the selling of land for the mining project has also emerged among locals interested in the protection of spiritual, cultural, and environmental values. The local opposition, which triggered the largest environmental movement in post-communist Romania, has been targeted by supporters of corporate mining to portray the village in a Balkanist fashion: as an 'illiberal' space whose desire to protect cultural values signifies a perilous historical tradition of anti-Western modernism, a ghost of past communism and nationalism allied with the new 'enemies' of development, i.e. the Greens.

Therefore, the controversy that has arisen in the last 10 years in Rosia Montana may be summarized as follows: on the one hand, the corporation has sought to discredit the opposition movement by labeling it 'communist nostalgia', 'nationalist habit', or 'green extremism', thereby alluding to the state's vulnerabilities and the marginal status of the region. On the other hand, much of the local popular resistance to the corporation has been motivated by arguments related to religion, kinship, land, ethnicity, tradition. Locals testify that the state is (rather) silent to their demands to protect 'homes and cemeteries' and that the corporation is arrogant in treating them as 'backward'.

The personal stories reproduced in this article show that both national feelings of rootedness (cultural struggle) and the support for corporate mining are not mere forms of ideological engagement manipulated towards programmatic ends. The narratives of the people do not 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 one ideology or another as most locals do not perceive themselves as 'activists'. Rather, they are expressions of frustration over perceived lack of authentic choice, opportunities, and debates over the future and resentment over single-minded impositions. 'To sell or not to sell' is, therefore, a life-related choice that has been reduced to a non-choice: equally acceptable, it prompts to ambiguity and uncertainty and offers no compelling vision of the future, either for the locals as individuals or for the collective. The ongoing Transylvanian controversy illustrates a tragic encounter between the moral and the commercial economy. This article will analyze this encounter as a tension between aesthetics (culture) and ideology (politics) which creates the conditions of possibility for resistance to emerge. What can this resistance mean?

Global Developmentalism, Balkanism, and Resistance in Eastern Europe

Colonialism had a civilizing mission of settlement. Neocolonialism had a modernizing mission of development. (Spivak, 2001, p. 216)

After 1989, economic, social, or environmental problems in Eastern Europe seem to be mainly attributed to a lack of capitalism, having been retarded by communism's institutionalized narratives about the misdeeds of capitalism (Tamas, 2006). The 'inevitability' and desirability of the capitalist market and liberal democracy has not generally been questioned. One can connect the 'peaceful' 'transition' to capitalism with the fact that the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) does not share the colonial discourse that has animated many ex-Third World countries or their anti-globalization discourses. Globalization in the Eastern bloc context has strongly been equated with membership of the European Union 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 were presented as inevitable and conducive to a better life.

As a result, much of the literature on post-communism has focused merely on the region's need to make the transition to liberal democracy and capitalism. As Tismaneanu has argued, the political and moral vacuum in which this part of the world was catapulted after 1989 has only two options: it will either be liberal or it will tragically end up within the new varieties of extremisms. Thus, the only 'resistance' this region seems to produce is the resistance that comes from extremist societal residues to be viewed as a dangerous tendency in an ideological struggle.

> In all these societies, movements and parties have emerged that romanticize the past, idealize authoritarian traditions, deprecate parliamentarism. . . . The anti-capitalist and anti-democratic sentiments, including paternalistic, corporatist and populist nostalgias, could coalesce in new authoritarian experiments. (Tismaneanu, 1998, pp. 3–5)

One can, thus, think that this perspective is already the answer to the question raised by this article: that 'resistance' to neoliberal globalization is a reaction motivated by insecurities of transition and articulated in the ideological language of communism, nationalism, or other extremist ghosts of the past. Labeling resistance to corporate globalization in Romania as anti-modern and extreme can in fact be viewed as a perpetuation of the Balkanism: that is, a 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 (also by the locals themselves) 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'(Antohi, 2005). This self-colonization has added a tendency to escape individually from ethnic stigma by over-criticizing the country and its fellows as a Romanian national sport making fun of the stigma with black humor, self-irony, and relativism.

In this Balkanist vein, 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. But resistance, as described in Balkanist terms, is not to be seen as the only form of resistance that CEE is producing. The resistance we refer to in this article hints to forms of critical interrogation of neoliberal ideology, questioning the market as the only possibility to wealth creation. It does not have to mean a nationalist, leftist, ecologist, anarchist, or other ideological struggle, though it may borrow from these. For instance, labeling movements as being 'anti-globalization' is in itself ambivalent; thus, the movements are also referred to as 'alternative globalization movements', critical globalization movements, or anti-corporate globalization. These

are usually pluralized to reflect the diversity and difference among the collectives contesting neo-liberal hegemony, and the equally diverse imaginings and practices of 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 neoliberal financial processes of globalization that work in favor of a small elite in developed countries (Kingsnorth, 2003).

When talking of resistance in Balkanist terms the spectrum for the examination of resistance is limited to fit the mainstream liberal discourse. The Rosia Montana case presented in this article illustrates a more complex as well as ambiguous landscape of resistance that considers family ancestry and historical traditions while also questioning these as solid fundaments. For Tismaneanu though, 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' (Tismaneanu, 1998, p. 95). This, however, does not equal a slide into an extremist mindset and, therefore, the journey does not have to be limited to 'the liberal way or the extremist way'. As part of struggles for self-determination, people often (re)invent the argument of home-land as a place of attachment. To reject this gesture would probably make sense if the state project were actually pluralist (Krishna, 2003). 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.

One can argue that the Balkanist scholarly trend after 1989 is in itself ideological precisely because it poses as non-valuational, objective, and neutral while actually supporting the 'there is no other way' mantra of neoliberal corporate globalization. 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 (Scholte, 2000). But, while the disillusionment with market capitalism has been growing for the many vulnerable, those who controlled the 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. ... Economi-cally global corporations too, looked 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. (Haynes, 2001, p. 217)

Therefore, the Balkanist discourse is to be looked at from the perspective of post-Cold War triumph of neoliberalism (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 devel-opment: 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 (Escobar, 1995). Their application in the practices of key social insti-tutions was intimately related to the reconfiguration of power relations in former communist states. Neoliberal globalization, thus, strikes us through a complex way in which the neoliberal

paradigm has been pushed as *the* ideal thought. Here, Balkanism may be seen as a practice or a tool for such subtle impositions. There is 'an increasing volume of information that is continually coded and recoded to meet the interests of corporate capitalism' (White, 1991, p. 120), 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.

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 choice, for the development of the community in Rosia Montana' (RMGC, 2006).

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' (RMGC, 2007). Moreover, this historical background is now supposedly being inflated by a 'Western, alien' environmental activism that would like to 'keep the poor, poor'.

By approaching the discourse of Balkanism and developmentalism from a critical perspective, this article contextualizes the Rosia Montana movement and challenges the moralizing description of post-communist as a landscape marked by extremist latencies. Resistance as well as compliance to neoliberal globalization is elusive as we shall read in the personal stories.

The Rosia Montana Controversy: Brief Historical Background

An overview of the mining history in Rosia Montana would give an outline of its historically tensioned integration into the global flows of commerce and modernization. Only after the formation of the official Romanian state in 1918 had legislation partially fulfilled what (still) appears to be the aspiration of people in Transylvania, i.e. to be the owners/beneficiaries of the land and its resources. The Mine Law of 1924 made the state the main owner of the natural resources of its soil and the main decision maker for their use. This had positive and negative implications as poorer miner/entrepreneurs were disadvantaged by the high state revenues. Technological advances contributed to the intensification of metal exploitation between 1933 and 1939. The Communists considered private mining (in the system of 'cuxe' or miners' associations) irrational and, in 1948, nationalized the means of production to intensify further the exploitation of metals (Roman et al., 1982).

In October 1999, the area was officially declared a '*disadvantaged zone*' for mono-industrial mining, offering financial incentives for private investors (Gabriel Resources, 1999). Rosia Montana became one of the many places in Romania where the lack of modern 'progress' compelled foreign investments in mining. In 1997, Călin Popescu Tăriceanu, Romanian Minister of Industry and Commerce at that time, representing the National Liberal Party, signed an agreement for the association between Gabriel Resources Ltd, a Canadian company, registered in Barbados, and the Copper Autonomous Regie in Deva (Transylvania); the association was further named S.C. Rosia Montana Gold Corporation S.A. (RMGC). According to the agreement, the Canadian company owns 80% of the shares while the Romanian part is 20%. All information regarding this contract was classified despite the obligation under Law no. 544/2001 to make public any information that involves the state as a shareholder (Chifan, 2007). In 2007, Romania's accession to the

EU also meant that state subsidy for mining should cease and, thus, the Minvest Deva was closed. The declaration of the area as mono-industrial allowed RMGC's land exploration and closed the village in a deadlock. As a result, other development possibilities were foreclosed.

Between 1997 and 2005, the company carried out large geological exploration programs (mapping and sampling, underground drilling, geophysical and topographic measuring) as well as geochemical, mineralogical, and petrographic analysis. However, it did not manage to obtain the exploitation license, mainly because of the local opposition of Alburnus Maior (this was the name of the village during Roman times, and it has now been revived to designate the local organization opposing the corporate project). In September 2000 over 300 subsistence farming families from Rosia Montana and 100 families from neighboring areas decided to form this community organization to oppose the corporation (RMGC) on social, environmental, cultural, and economic grounds: 'Gabriel's cyanide leach open-cast gold mine proposal poses major risks to the natural environment, the population, the cultural patrimony and will not contribute to sustainable development and wealth creation'. (Save Rosia Montana, 2002). At the same time it was planning to develop sustainable alternatives to mining for the region through tourist, agribusiness, craft, and small–medium industries as well as cultural projects.

For more than 10 years, Alburnus continued to demand alternatives, despite the fact that the villagers of Rosia Montana had been under severe pressure to accept the privatization of the mining enterprise following the proposal of the project by the Canadian corporation. The coming of Gabriel Resources to Rosia Montana was from the beginning a suspicious presence for the locals. People were afraid that the mining operations were already poisoning their lands and cattle and that the corporate jobs were illusory. As with any large economic investment, the mining project has nurtured reactions both for and against. A closer look into the local stories reveals the ambiguity of both pro-selling and pro-preserving (the land) which is the focus on the next section.

Although between 2002 and 2010, around 80% of the habitants have sold their properties to the Gold Corporation, local opposition remained strong with the support of an entire cohort of national and international NGOs and activists as well as other citizens supporting campaigns against the corporate project. Thus, in September 2007 a crucial victory of the resistance opposition was announced: the licensing procedure for the RMGC project was cancelled. As a consequence of this decision, in November 2007 the Cluj Tribunal made the definitive decision to annul the Urbanist Certificate No. 78/ 26.04.2006, granted by the Alba County Council to RMGC to continue the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedure. Later on in January 2008, Alba Iulia's Court of Appeal declared the Rosia Montana's Urbanistic Plans illegal. However, pressures for the project's implementation are currently rising in the context of the global economic crisis, while various forces—such as corporate financial speculations, EU's obscurity, macro-political instability and governmental hesitations, NGO protests and local migration—are pushing and pulling in different directions.

'Our Mountains Bear Gold, and we Beg From Door to Door'

A popular local saying, the title of this section echoes the ambivalence of the positions expressed with regard to the corporate project. On the one hand, one can read it as bitterness over not being able to share in the richness of Rosia Montana and, by implication that foreign corporate 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 riches for and by local people. Within this context, the section will analyze locals' reactions to the encounter of commercial and ethical life mirrored

in the decision on 'to sell or not to sell'. This section reveals an 'aesthetics of resistance' by attempting to bring to life uncertain positioning, incomplete visions, and also emotions—concerns, fears, hopes, and disappointments of the people of Rosia Montana as disrupted subjectivities at the crossroads of Romania's capitalist development.

Interviewing 30 out of the 100 locals still living in Rosia, I found that between 2002 and 2010 more and more locals in Rosia Montana had sold their land (in its entirety or partially) and left for various reasons, including the lack of jobs, a desire for a different lifestyle away from the tensioned situation, and the need of children to attend different schools. Some locals have sold only part of their land and have insisted on preserving other parts. Personal stories reveal ambiguous feelings with regard to the authenticity of choices. Those 100 people who still refuse commodification of their possessions are also ambiguous about their choice. Leaving or staying in Rosia Montana is never a simple straightforward decision. We argue that this overall discursive indeterminacy may be seen as a symbolical and tactical site of resistance.

Though at the beginning of the controversy there were stronger assumptions that those who left were simply 'weak' or 'greedy' and those who stayed were 'strong' or morally superior, this view has become increasingly questionable. There are people who choose to stay merely to 'wait' for a better price for their properties and those who leave (to settle somewhere else) but periodically (or/and symbolically) return to Rosia Montana. There are also those 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. Some of them felt the pressure of leaving with bitterness, confessing to opposition leaders: '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/cities across Romania. Memories of 'home' and of the past are a daily companion to an anguished present; 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. Some locals perceived the corporation as pushing for displacement while others accepted this situation as inevitable rather than desirable:

> They (the corporate people) 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, so that people become unemployed, another form of intimidation but with two sides: the fury of the unemployed was rising . . .

> The Gold Corporation did not force anybody to move. We left because we were not well. If there would be no Gold, other company would come.

In referring to landscapes of resistance, the suffix 'scapes' points to the fluid, irregular shapes of landscapes, perspectives constructed by actors who are historically, politically, and linguistically situated in locations ranging from families and villages to states and corporations. To ascribe a singular identity to the resistance is to miss much of the resistance's scope. Local stories point to the future as an insecure 'scape' as a tensioned relationship between the global and the local is established: the local idealized attachment to home, as a space of beauty, hospitability, richness and the global ventures of Romanians, the migrant space of the unsettled, the 'beggar', the servant. This relation has implications for the aesthetics of resistance as it nurtures ambiguous 'feeling(scapes)' of people having to live with both the fantasy of wanting to move (and/or stay) and the reality (threat) of having to move, thus, becoming part of what Appadurai calls the 'ethnoscape' of the global cultural economy (1990). The local discourse of displacement reveals a non-choice, almost a naturalized conformity with the inescapable global flows.

> 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. . . . making people migrate nowhere in Spain as dogs in the streets!

One of the most frequently mentioned values of the locals in Rosia Montana is related to culture and traditions. 'How can you sell your ancestors' land?' is a question raised in innumerable conversations with locals. These values have tremendous power over their life-decisions as they are related to a belief that both themselves and the land (the mine) are protected by God. Consequently, it would be contrary to this Christian belief to allow the alienation of their parents' homes and their ancestors' land. Home has a special meaning related to security: the more memories are fixed in space, the stronger they appear. One of the most important spaces for memory is *home* because it contains the strongest thoughts and dreams. Therefore, the locals' description of their feelings with regard to their possible displacement make us 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.

Petru is a 61-year-old who decided to come back to his parents' home in Rosia Montana after working elsewhere. This return symbolized his return to a meaningful life. However, his surprise was that he could not enjoy a peaceful home 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 motivation for not selling his land:

> 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 . . .

The tragic encounter between cultural/ethical concerns and commercial imperatives is visible at micro-level—a difficulty to choose, an in-between(ness) of families and individuals torn between such pressures. On the one hand, selling the land has 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 Rosia. There are people who internalize the corporate story and present their self-displacement as a new happy beginning regarding their former home as a devalued land. Some are well adjusted in their new homes in other places across Romania.

> Things have changed for me ever since the corporation came here. My sons are both working for the Gold now. They graduated in IT and accounting studies respectively.

Sharing the corporation's discourse, some of the former Rosieni believe in the possibility that the corporate project can bring progress and a better lifestyle for the people living in Rosia Montana or around the village while it can also improve the actual situation of the environment already damaged by previous mining. The condition is 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', some locals argue.

These sorts of statements make us think that for some of the displaced people the 'dreams' of capitalism came true. The fantasies of individual gain, 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 just one signature, which made their property a corporate possession. As Navaro-Yashin argues, this pragmatism can be seen as a symptom 'about an income, about bread and butter. Alienation is self-evident, but what else could be done?' (2002, p. 165) Whether (enlightened) false consciousness or simply alienation, these forms of routine pragmatism have become almost fashionable in post-communism reproducing the power of capitalism and its ideology of neoliberalism. Ideology is not merely a belief system or a 'false consciousness' alienating people from their 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 (Shapiro, 1988). The need of 'marketability' is of relevance in the subject's conformity with the socially prevalent ideology. A function necessary for individual adaptation, ideology is producing docility and normalization, of which the corporation in Rosia surely knew how to take advantage.

Most people describe life in Rosia as a particularly difficult one, with no job opportunities being the main problem. The memories of Rosia are mixed: while remembering times when the community was peaceful and prosperous, when people celebrated Easter together in the piazza, 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'. Some displaced people admit that while life in their new home may be easier, they are looked upon as 'aliens' and they feel alienated from home.

> 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.

Locals are generally open to investments and business; some express support for mining, the ones who sold their land are not necessarily in support of mining or of the corporate project, others dispute the means and forms of mining themselves, others prefer non-mining economic activities such as agro-eco-tourism or small crafts. Some of the displaced people criticize the locals who oppose the corporation for being 'nostalgic' to believe one can make a living out of agro-tourism and harvesting forest-fruits or mushrooms.

> 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.

In this context, the corporation and its supporters have 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' (1971, p. 285). Indeed, what the corporation managed to do is to mobilize a great part of the community and of the nation around 'production' (exploitation of gold) and work as wage-earning and job creation. Surely, this is not entirely the 'virtu' of the corporation and the capitalist economy; memories of job security during communism have certainly added to this pro-mining mobilization. Moreover, capitalism may be the 'toughest stage of humanity' according to some locals, but it is also perceived as inescapable. There is widespread perception that the state could have done something to halt the hardship—not allowing the state

mine to be privatized or not declaring the area as 'disadvantaged'. In any case, the ideological and political propaganda of the corporation has found the right seeds to grow the fantasy of capitalist liberation and prosperity. This may be the new 'enslavement' I first heard about when traveling to Rosia: the dependence of the majority on the 'wage' in the context of resource alienation. Locals, then, can only 'sell' their own labor in order to make a living. The market is beyond their control and hence they internalize it as inescapable.

Some of the locals who refuse the commodification of their homes in Rosia placed a metallic tablet on their houses to convey the message 'This property is not for sale'. Moreover, by participating in the resistance actions of the community organization Alburnus Maior, locals have become 'visible' in the sense that Rancière 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 (Rancière, 1999). However, 'not selling' does not necessarily equate clear-cut satisfaction about the situation of the area either. Many of the remaining locals (and especially the younger ones) are expressing distress about the deadlock of their village. Ovidiu is a 31-year-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. Nevertheless, longing for material prosperity does not equate with whole-hearted desires for Westernization of lifestyles and the acceptance of any path leading to this type of lifestyle. Desire and disappointment go hand in hand.

> 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. 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.

Many discussions with these 'citizens' gave me the impression that displacement can possibly be a 'solution' to a problem that was not dialogically defined and negotiated. The consent of the locals 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 in which 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 locals, even if they refuse negotiation, had been periodically visited, if not harassed, by corporate representatives presenting their offer), the locals had no choice but to let the corporation set the rules; it has, thus, had the power to fragment and tear apart not only the opposition movement but also families themselves (in locals' words, 'divide et impera', divide and conquer).

The controversy is ultimately about values: what is to be valued and what not. In the Rosia context, however, value as a coherent concept is doubtful. Transactions are hardly to be 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. As Appadurai argues, not every act of commodity exchange is done in a context of shared cultural assumptions: 'Dealing with strangers might provide contexts to the commoditization of things that are otherwise protected from commoditization' (Appadurai, 1986, p. 15).

What was the problem of Rosia anyway? Why should homes be so easily transformed into objects for sale? And how is 'home' to be defined anyway? 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 and husband and has a son at 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 take care of her mother at the same time. However, this was about to change because life in Rosia was becoming increasingly complicated given the lack of jobs. Lucretia felt her heart was telling her to stay and continue her peaceful and healthy life there. She loved her mother's home, but she also loved her son and she was feeling guilty that she did not have enough money to help him with school: 'how will I find money for him? I am still young and I should be working more but we have no jobs . . .', she told 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 and home is under threat. This was becoming unbearable (sometimes they were moved to tears) especially after hearing news about neighbors who sold and left. The feeling that was most discouraging was that of the slow but sure extinction of the village. How can one live in a place that has received the death penalty?

Her story prompted me to recognize the complexity of her case given the difficulty to choose between giving up the traditional lifestyle and especially the home and opposing the project. Lucretia was always complaining that she feels stuck and does 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 parental home.

While she repeatedly expressed her worries 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 countryside, she was proud of her cows and pigs, her large yard and house, her land. They did not feel poor just because they did not have enough money; they seemed to be frustrated by the societal neglect of their possessions as wealth. In this sense, 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 everything: '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' (Crary, 1991, p. 10). Thus, the locals' reclaiming of 'what is not for sale' is a subversion of a seemingly naturalized order of exchange, a disturbing blockage in the global flow of capital.

The contradictory 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. 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' (Appadurai, 1990, p. 5). The ironic twist of democracy within the neoliberal capitalist economic system nowadays is that it disempowers both the state and the citizens and makes traumas of displacement and deterritorialization look like 'free-choice'.

Framing and Naming: The Ambiguous Rosia Montana

Rosia Montana appears as a space of tensions of an economic and cultural nature in which borders as well as identities are both fluid and inescapably material. This 'asks people both to use and refuse who they are, to draw upon their identities (as Second World subjects) . . ., but also to constantly challenge the definition of these subjectivities' (Sharp, 2003, p. 59). In this sense, the post-communist condition is similar to that of postcolonialism where the uses of Balkanism, as a discourse of incompleteness became a 'convenient substitute for the emotional discharge that Orientalism provided, exempting the West from charges of racism, colonialism, eurocentrism' (Todorova, 2009, p. 188).

Within a critical framework that tries to consider uncertainties, framing Rosia Montana is a complicated process: we can identify at least four frames that are relevant in understanding interpretations individuals create to attach meaning to events. First, stories prompt us to an injustice frame—there is an overwhelming feeling of moral indignation among locals regarding the conduct of the corporation and the state. The corporation is viewed by the opponents as fraudulent and the state as a silent accomplice. Locals ask: What about our values? Where do you leave history and culture? One can, thus, argue that the 'one to blame', as well the rationale for engaging, seem clear. However, there is also one concern: who are the victims? Many locals sold their properties to the corporation. Whether selling or preserving land one cannot appraise the probity of these choices because there is no commonly agreed-upon moral frame to apply to the dispute. Therefore, what happens in Rosia may be viewed as a '*differend*': in Lyotard's words, a case of conflict between (at least) two parties that cannot be equitable resolved for the lack of a rule of judgment applicable to both arguments. One side's legitimacy does not imply the other's lack of legitimacy. The conflict between the corporation and the opponents of the project cannot be subjected and confined to the rules of 'cognitive phrases', i.e. of truth and falsehood (Lyotard, 1988).

Second, we can identify the prognostic frame (or 'what to do'); a set of varied, multiple, and complex means of actions have been employed by the opposition movement in Rosia with the support of an entire cohort of national and international NGOs. Many of these succeeded in blocking the corporate project and may be seen, in Rancière's words, as acts of '*subjectification*' (1999). There is, however, a question that locals ask: So, what now? The corporation is blocked but what about 'us' and the village? The prevailing feeling is that nothing/no one can offer solutions to ease the pains of the disruptions occurring in the last 10 years. Surely, the anxiety and the insecurities that the locals experience are nothing new in the milieu of human reactions to modernity's disruptions. However, in the Rosia context, neither the market nor the state is entrusted to tackle their problems. 'Is there an alternative?' appears as the question haunting politics in Romania.

The third frame is the motivational frame (belief in the possibility to alter conditions or agency). Agency has existed in Rosia and may be seen as a form of 'subaltern' resistance: as one local confessed 'We were many in the beginning, over 80 percent . . . that was the real enthusiasm; with the brain unaffected by propaganda, manipulation . . . it was spontaneous and beautiful'; this agency has been gradually weakened given the lingering uncertainty, nerve-racking life, and deprivation. Plus, there is overwhelming uncertainty about what 'success' or 'change' can mean: would it only mean driving away the corporation? Was the corporation the only problem in the first place? Or was it only attracted by the lack of state concern for life to thrive in Rosia? In Rosia, as the locals' stories tell us, there is widespread feeling that Romania, as a collective, has no rule, no authority to stir responsible development.

These questions lead us to the last frame: the identity frame ('they' versus 'us/we'). While this frame exists and explains some of the success in terms of mobilization to prevent corporate mining, resistance against the 'enemy' has in itself been an ambiguous attitude: making the 'we' more important than the individual has been very difficult. The problem with 'subaltern' consciousness (peasant or proletariat) is that such a 'thing' to be disclosed as 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'. In this case, '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' (Guha and Spivak, 1988, p. 12).

Conclusion: For an Aesthetics of Post-Communist Resistance

Resistance to neoliberalism in the post-communist context is ambiguous: it is hard to pinpoint an 'enemy', a 'collective we', 'victims', or 'traitors' as well as an ideology. Much of the local popular resistance has been motivated by arguments related to religion, kinship, land, ethnicity, tradition: a case of 'subaltern' resistance. I use the term 'subaltern' to indicate the people in Rosia, but it can broadly refer to 'the people', the small peasants, landless or workers, lower and even middle 'classes' of people, mostly vulnerable categories irrespective of the political regimes they live in. It appears in contrast with elites that are politically and ideologically situated 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) and thus cover and ideologically justify any oppression of their 'people' that hereby occurs. The 'people' has been traditionally discredited as irrelevant and irrational and worthy of political value only insofar as it could become 'meat' for the 'guns' of political projects.

On the contrary, the elites' superiority when speaking and deciding for the fool masses (or of the colonizers in relation to the colonized) is a moment of profound delusion: the very fact that the masses understand any command is upsetting any such superiority (Rancière, 1999). Subaltern politics is thus 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. To ascribe a singular identity to their resistance is to miss much of the resistance's scope and to trivialize conformity with the market logic of commodification.

A closer look at the life-worlds of locals reflects uncertainty and loss of hope in the face of what appears to be inescapable, making choice a futile exercise. The local resistance reflects a micro-struggle that goes beyond ideological divisions; it themes people's freedom to choose, not in the party-political sense (there is no elite replacement) but in an aesthetic/cultural sense, focused on imagining alternatives and multiplicity. Surely culture is fractured; society comprises different interpretations of what is meaningful and valuable. That is why cultural fault-lines are relevant: for not taking the 'fixing' of meanings as an 'accomplishment' of politics but rather as a deadlock.

The personal stories reproduced in this article show that ambiguity prevails: national feelings of rootedness and cultural struggle are not mere forms of nationalism as an ideological manipulative instrument deployed towards some programmatic end; the narratives of people do not reveal anti-modern or anti-industrial sentiments of a clear-cut communist or environmentalist nature but rather resentment over single-minded impositions, frustration over lack of choice and common debates over the future. The cradle of resistance in the case of Rosia lies precisely

in this overall indeterminacy and elusiveness of unified and homogenous movement or 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 (as cultural) and not ideologically (as political) because they deny certainty. Moreover, these attitudes contradict the very 'essence' that perpetuates Balkanism as a convenient tool of global developmentalism (and corporatism): Balkanism has been a 'mental map', a portrait of 'dangerous' ambiguity. Todorova argues that 'Unlike Orientalism, which is a discourse about an imputed opposition, Balkanism is a discourse about an imputed ambiguity. Ambiguity is treated as abnormal (2009, p. 17). However, as Todorova argues against this essentialization, the Balkans can surprise us with an ontology of constant change: a 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' (Ehrenpreis, 1928, pp. 11–13). This vacillation and ambivalence cannot be relied upon to authentically praise the new capitalist regime or other power regime.

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 the Balkans. This ambiguity, seen as merely a 'dangerous incompleteness' on the drawbridge towards the ideal capitalist society of states, 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.

Without a sense of certainty, individuals can be political in an open and critical sense of subjecthood (Rancière, 2006) and not merely 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' (Shapiro, 2008, p. 8). A rather disorganized multiplicity of voices, locals' accounts mostly resist a singular arrest of 'truth' by revealing its cracks. Indetermination, a moment of suspension in arrest, reflects various (multiple) possibilities.

A crucial irony of the politics of cultural globalization is that it 'plays havoc with the hegemony of Euro-chronology' (Appadurai, 1990, p. 3). This havoc is meeting what has been theorized as a lasting tension that characterizes Romanian political culture: the tension between (mutually critical) culture and politics. By culture, we also mean an aesthetic expression of an (idealized authentic) 'soul of the people' or solidarity in subaltern consciousness that despite its potential to be ideologically manipulated by the political (Czobor-Lupp, 2002) or strategically essentialized for political reasons (Guha and Spivak, 1988), it can also remain open and uncertain to be viewed aesthetically. The cultural/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 the drifting sand of any hegemonic platform.

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