



# Beyond Mining

Collective Imagination and Community  
Cohesion in Roșia Montană



(Roșia Montană seen from Tăul Brazi, personal archive)

MSc Sustainable Development  
Faculty of Geosciences | Utrecht University  
Under the supervision of Dr. Diana Vela-Almeida



**E. M. Vrînceanu**

MSc Sustainable Development | Earth System Governance Track

Utrecht University

# **Beyond Mining: Collective Imagination and Community Cohesion in Roșia Montană**

Thesis supervisor: Dr. Diana Vela-Almeida

Second assessor: Dr. Josephine Chambers

August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024

## Abstract

This study examines the relationship between collective imagination and social cohesion in Roșia Montană, a UNESCO World Heritage Site deeply impacted by a proposed project. The primary objective is to explore how socio-economic and environmental disruptions, particularly those caused by the Roșia Montană Gold Corporation (RMGC) project, have influenced local imaginaries and community cohesion. Using an ethnographic approach, the research integrates desk research, in-depth interviews, and participant observation conducted over nine months. The analysis reveals that the improper closure of the Cetate Quarry and the socio-political struggle related to the RMGC project have fragmented social cohesion, resulting in diverse and often conflicting local imaginaries, which have been identified and described. Despite numerous challenges, grassroots movements and local initiatives continue being pivotal in fostering a renewed sense of community and envisioning sustainable development. The study introduces the concept of imagination deinfrastructuring, suggesting that the intentional dismantling of imaginative elements supporting social cohesion leads to significant community disruption, as it tends to happen in cases of displacement and resettlement. This research contributes to the theoretical understanding of the interplay between social cohesion and collective imagination, offering new insights for the future literature. Recommendations for policymakers and community leaders have been included, along with strategies for supporting economic revival in the post-mining site. The thesis underscores the necessity of inclusive and imaginative approaches to community building, particularly in contexts marked by historical injustices and socio-economic vulnerabilities.

## Key words

Social cohesion

Collective imagination

Post-mining development

Mine closure

Imagination deinfrastructuring

## Acknowledgements

While many have enthusiastically asked me how come I have chosen Roşia Montană as my research topic, others have tried to scare me away from this topic and place. Despite numerous attempts to come up with a rational explanation regarding my choice, I must acknowledge the truth, no matter how mystical it might sound: I am inclined to say that it was Roşia Montană who chose me, rather than the other way around.

Of course, my thesis could have been possible without the people I have met during my stay in Roşia Montană, whom I all have to thank for their incredible hospitality and warmth. I want to particularly thank Sorin Jurca, Claudia Apostol, and Stephanie D. Roth for all their precious insights and their unwavering dedication to everything which Roşia Montană encompasses. Their local knowledge and enthusiasm have been instrumental in the success of my research, and it has been an honour meeting and working with them.

This project could not have happened without the invaluable supervision of Dr. Diana Vela-Almeida, who guided and encouraged me every step of the way. She has been a source of inspiration and motivation throughout my research endeavours the past year. I also have to thank Dr. Josie Chambers for introducing me to the realm of imagination in sustainability transitions already so many years ago. I would have never expected that these three topics – imagination, mining, and sustainability – could intertwine as beautifully as they did in my thesis.

I am also thankful to all my friends, old and new, who have been by my side the past year – your presence truly made a difference. Last, but not least, I am deeply grateful to my mom for her patience and complete emotional support. Without her, none of my achievements would have been possible.

To me, having such incredible people in my life is a true privilege.



## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
Key words.....	3
Acknowledgements.....	4
Table of Contents.....	5
Glossary.....	7
1. Introduction .....	9
1.1 The Case of Roşia Montană .....	9
1.2 Problem definition .....	12
1.3 Knowledge Gap .....	14
1.4 Research Aims.....	15
1.5 Research Questions.....	15
1.6 Research Framework .....	15
1.7 Scientific and Societal Relevance .....	16
2. Theoretical Foundations .....	18
2.1 Social Cohesion and Collective Imagination .....	18
2.1.1 Social Cohesion and its dimensions .....	18
2.1.2 The Role of Collective Imagination .....	20
2.1.3 Collective Imagination vs. Imaginaries.....	21
2.2 Untangling Collective Imagination .....	22
2.2.1 Imagination Materials .....	22
2.2.2 Shifts in Imaginaries .....	25
2.3 A Framework on the Interplay between Imagination and Social Cohesion .....	27
2.3.1 The Individual Layer: Infrastructuring of Imagination .....	28
2.3.2 The Community Layer: Infrastructuring through Imagination.....	29
2.3.3 The Institutional Layer: Infrastructuring for Imagination .....	30
2.4 Conceptual Model.....	31
2.4.1 Visual Representation .....	31
2.4.2 Limitations of the Framework.....	33
3. Methodology.....	35
3.1 Ethnographic Approach .....	35
3.2 Data Collection.....	37
3.3 Data analysis .....	39

3.4 Ethics and Positionality Statement .....	40
4. Results .....	42
4.1 Historical Background .....	42
4.1.1 Up to and Including Communism.....	43
4.1.2 The Start of Industrial Mining: A change in Scenery.....	46
4.1.3 The Shift to Capitalism in the 90's and RMGC's Arrival .....	47
4.1.4 Institutions, Infrastructure and Misinformation .....	50
4.2 Social Cohesion and Collective Imagination Nowadays.....	55
4.2.1 Attachment and Belonging .....	55
4.2.2 Social Relations .....	60
4.2.3 Spirituality .....	62
4.2.4 Shared Values.....	64
4.2.5 (In)Equality .....	66
4.2.6 Subjective/Objective Quality of Life .....	68
4.2.7 Orientation towards Common Good .....	70
5. Discussion & Recommendations.....	73
5.1 Main Imaginaries and Current Tensions .....	73
5.2 The Elephant in the Room: Imagination Deinfrastructuring.....	77
5.3 Reimagining the Future.....	84
5.4 Recommendations .....	85
5.5 Reflection .....	87
6. Conclusion.....	89
6.1 Limitations of this Research Project .....	90
6.2 Implications for Further Research.....	91
7. References .....	93
Appendix A.....	119



## Glossary

ARA = Asociația Arhitectură. Restaurare. Arheologie.

Asociația Alburnus Maior = Non-Governmental Organization based in Roșia Montană opposing the RMGC project

CBE = Community Based Economy

ICSID = International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes

NGO = Non-Governmental Organization

RMGC = Roșia Montană Gold Corporation

also referred to in text as “the Company” or “Gold”

Gabriel Resources is part of RMGC, together with the Romanian state

Save Roșia Montană = National movement opposing RMGC’s project, which militated both against the environmental destruction of the area and against corruption.

UNESCO = United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization



*Figure 1 Save Roșia Montană  
Movement Logo*



*Oral tradition says that the gold in the river Arieș is linked to the story of Mount Găina<sup>1</sup>, where an incredibly beautiful fairy lived in a shining palace. The fairy owned a hen with golden feathers and laid three golden eggs each day. The fairy gathered all the eggs and once a year she gave the collection to a poor girl from the area, as dowry for when she ought to get married. The villagers lived in harmony with the fairy for a very long time. However, one day three young bachelors decided, upon hearing about the fairy's wealth, to disguise themselves in women's clothes and attempt a ruse. The three moți<sup>2</sup> secretly entered the palace and managed to steal the hen together with the golden eggs. In their clumsy flight, the golden eggs escaped from the basket and got lost into the merciless waters of the Arieș river. Scared, they hid the hen deep in the mountains. Since then, the Arieș carries gold fragments in its sand and the mountain protects the golden treasure. For hundreds of years after the ruse, men from Țara Moților<sup>3</sup> extracted gold from the river and the mountains in attempt to regain the lost wealth.*

#### **The Legend of the Arieș River<sup>4</sup>**

---

<sup>1</sup> Găină: Romanian for *hen*

<sup>2</sup> Moți: ethnic group from Țara Moților

<sup>3</sup> Țara Moților: (English: The Land of the Moți) ethnogeographical region surrounding the basin of the Arieș river (Travel Guide Romania, 2020). The region has a rich history of resistance and fighting for political, economic and social rights such as the *Revolt of Horea, Cloșca and Crișan* (Pascu, 1984; Winkler, n.d.).

<sup>4</sup> The Legend of the Arieș River is orally transmitted through The Girl's Fair on Mount Găina. This is a traditional festivity at the middle of July originating hundreds of years ago, where villagers gather to exchange products and produce. It is also an occasion for young men and women from across Țara Moților to meet and/or find their suitors. The girls, accompanied by their parents, come with dowry loaded on their horses. The wedding used to be performed on the spot by the local priest, with other villagers singing and dancing according to local tradition (Alba24.ro, 2023)



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 The Case of Roşia Montană

Mining has shaped human civilization as we know today by leaving irreversible marks on both the natural environment and on the social fabric<sup>5</sup> of communities (Coulson, 2012). Among the different types of industrial-scale ore extraction, gold mining in particular stands out as potentially the most problematic in terms of damages to socio-ecological systems (Earthworks, n.d.). The narrative of gold mining is most clearly a tale of contrasts. The practice stems from artisanal and small-scale extraction and spans millennia, and is therefore seen as embedded in and at the same time weaving the social fabric of mining communities (Ofosu-Mensah, n.d.). However, its origins are overshadowed by the emergence of industrial-scale operations, which are mainly driven by profit motives and little regard to the environmental and social damage caused (Conde & Le Billon, 2017; Hilson & Monhemius, 2006; Ouoba, 2017). The use of toxic chemicals, e.g. cyanide, in large-scale operations such as open-pit mining degrades the soil, above-ground and underground water systems, and poisons the natural environment, exacerbating the ecological damage beyond the creation of the pit (Iatan, 2021; Melenti & Magyar, 2011). Beyond its ecological implications, gold mining's impact extends to the social fabric of affected communities, as it often disrupts traditional ways of life, leading to social upheaval and disintegration of community cohesion (Jenkins, 2004; Petrova & Marinova, 2013).

This disruption is vividly exemplified in the case of Roşia Montană, where the clash between traditional artisanal mining practices and modern industrial-scale extraction projects has fuelled conflict and controversy for the past decades. Nestled within the picturesque landscapes of Romania's Apuseni Mountains, the village lies atop one of Europe's largest gold and silver reserves and has a long mining history spanning millennia (Cozma et al., 2015). The earliest known attestation of the settlement dates back to 131 A.D., with the establishment of Alburnus Maior by the Romans who colonized Dacia (F. Olteanu, 2019). Over the centuries, this heritage shaped the cultural identity of the community, with the remnants of ancient mining infrastructure earning the site UNESCO World Heritage status, as it hosts "the most significant, extensive and technically diverse Roman gold mining complex currently known in the world" (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2018). The settlement has remained of significant strategic

---

<sup>5</sup> The social fabric refers to the intricate network of social norms, relationships, and collective identities that bind individuals together within a community, shaping their interactions, cohesion, and resilience (Enander et al., 2010).

importance over time, adding to its rich history and cultural diversity (Ilovan, 2013; Olteanu, 2019). Today, the village is known as part of the ethnogeographical region Țara Moților, famous for its rich cultural heritage, social cohesion and traditional lifestyles (Buțiu & Pascaru, 2011, p. 5; Travel Guide Romania, 2020).

Despite its illustrious past, Roșia Montană's more recent history is marked by conflict and controversy, triggered by a proposed large-scale extraction project in the late 1990s (RMGC, 2015). The narrative of gold mining in this area is most clearly a tale of contrasts (Rus, 2021): from millennia of artisanal extraction ingrained in the mining community's social fabric and infrastructure, to modern industrial-scale operations tearing apart any sense of community and threatening the environment (Conde & Le Billon, 2017; Hilson & Monhemius, 2006; Ofosu-Mensah, n.d.; Ouoba, 2017). For the past 28 years, the area has been contentious in Romania due to a proposal to create Europe's largest open-pit gold mine (Manea, 2013). More specifically, the Canadian-listed company Gabriel Resources, led by the controversial mining tycoon Frank Timiș, set its sights on Roșia Montană and slyly lobbied for the mega-project (Balint-Kurti, 2019). The project was to be developed by Gabriel Resources together with the Romanian state through the newly formed Roșia Montană Gold Corporation<sup>6</sup> (hereinafter interchangeably referred to as "the Company," the acronym "RMGC" or simply as "Gold"). RMGC aimed to extract as much of the gold and silver available through cyanide-based mining techniques (RMGC, 2015) as explained by Bouniol below:

*"The project involves the destruction of four mountains and a village, including the construction of a massive retention dam for used water."* (Bouniol, 2013, p. 151).

Quickly, the controversy surrounding RMGC's plans and operations ignited significant debates, both domestically and internationally, revolving around extremely complex but intertwined topics surrounding environmental and social justice issues (Pelehatăi & Dulămiță, 2018). The conflict over the mining project stemmed from competing interests and concerns. Proponents of the mining project emphasised its potential economic benefits, including job creation, infrastructural development, and increased revenue for the region and the country as a whole (RMGC, n.d., 2007b, 2015). Additionally, proponents argued that modern mining technologies and regulations could mitigate environmental risks and ensure responsible resource extraction (RMGC, 2007a). Critics of the project, however, argued that the extensive

---

<sup>6</sup> RMGC was founded in 1997 and its main shareholders are Gabriel Resources (80.69%) and the state company Minvest Roșia Montană S.A. (19.31%) (RMGC, n.d.).

open-pit mining operations would irreversibly damage the surrounding environment, through the destruction of forests, contamination of water sources, and disruption of ecosystems (Leonte, 2018; Soare & Tufiş, 2021). Furthermore, concerns were raised regarding the chaotic displacement of residents, the loss of cultural heritage, and the irreversible impacts on traditional livelihoods (Alexander et al., 2018; Ilovan, 2013; Stanculescu, 2012).

### **Info Box 1: Roşia Montană, a movement**

The environmental concerns regarding the opening of a (new) large-scale open-pit mine have been central to the discussion on the Roşia Montană project from day one (Pelehatăi & Dulămiţă, 2018). Coordination between environmentalists, academics, local communities, and various civil society groups led to the emergence of the socio-ecological movement *Save Roşia Montană*, which challenged the corporate capitalist tendencies of post-communist Romania through the lens of this mining project (Alexandrescu, 2011; T. Olteanu & Beyerle, 2018; Velicu, 2016). From the start, the project was inextricably linked to stealth and corruption – as more and more evidence of this came to the surface, Romanians started taking the streets in opposition, not only in relation to the mining project but also to demand political changes (Niculescu, 2018; Recorder, 2017; Soare & Tufiş, 2021).

The movement garnered international attention and support, underscoring the significance of Roşia Montană as a symbol of resistance against extractive industries (Alexandrescu, 2020). The movement peaked during the massive protests of 2013, the largest demonstration against the government since the 1989 Revolution thus far (Manea, 2013; Romocea, 2013), and it eventually led to a halt in mining operations at Roşia Montană, to the relief of the residents and civil society (Pelehatăi & Dulămiţă, 2018).



Figure 2. “We don’t trust our Goldverment”

Protests for Roşia Montană in 2013 - mariusciucariu2002 on Flickr

The RMGC project created tensions within the community, fracturing social cohesion and eroding trust (Quartz Film, 2004). Residents grappled with conflicting narratives, torn between the promise of economic prosperity and the fear of irreversible environmental and social consequences (Pelehatăi & Dulămiță, 2018). Aggressive tactics employed by the mining company to acquire land and silence dissent further fuelled mistrust and division among community members (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2019; Quartz Film, 2004). Despite intense opposition, the mining project persisted for nearly three decades, leaving a lasting impact on the social fabric of Roșia Montană (Alexandrescu, 2020; Goțiu, 2024a). Trust between residents and external stakeholders remains fragile, hindering efforts to rebuild the social fabric and forge a shared vision for the future (Adoptă o Casă la Roșia Montană NGO, 2021).

## 1.2 Problem definition

Traditionally, the community of Roșia Montană was characterized by strong social relations, rooted in a shared cultural identity and collective memory of its prosperous mining past (Bâlici, 2013; Mutică, 2017; Vesalon & Crețan, 2012). Archives, as well as the elderly generation, vividly recall a time when artisanal mining practices brought economic abundance, tight-knit community relations, and a thriving local culture (Bocaniciu, 2019). Industrial-scale mining at Cetate Quarry had already changed the community's identity when it first started in the 1970s, as underground mining was halted in favour for open-pit mining (Țimonea, 2015). However, it was the advent of the controversial RMGC project proposed by Gabriel Resources in the late 1990s, which marked a turning point for the village, both in terms of identity and social cohesion (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2019; Goțiu, 2024a; Quartz Film, 2004).

The situation in Roșia Montană is particularly complex due to a series of events related to its long history of mining. Gold mining has been a significant activity in the region for millennia, mostly in the form of artisanal exploitation, but with industrial-scale operations following at Cetate Quarry from 1970 to 2006 (Rus, 2021). This mine was intended to be taken over by RMGC, but instead, it was abandoned, leading to an improper economic closure of the site (Albu et al., 2007; S. D. Roth, personal communication, June 29, 2024). The village's expectations for a revival of the mining sector were dashed, exacerbating socio-economic instability. According to Mokwakwa and Maphosa (2023), such reckless mine closures are often linked to decreased social cohesion.

The improper closure of the mine in Roșia Montană is rooted in the conflicting demands of international bodies and national interests (S. D. Roth, personal communication, June 29, 2024). As part of the European Union accession conditions, the Romanian government was required to close down mines that were not of national interest (Dani et al., 2006), including Cetate Quarry. However, the World Bank's stipulation that economically non-viable mines must be privatized and recultivated<sup>7</sup> for financial assistance (The World Bank, 2007) complicated the situation by creating conflicted demands. Consequently, while there was a formal closure of the mine, the mining license was transferred from MinVest Deva to RMGC (Government of Romania - Department for Infrastructure Projects and Foreign Investment, 2013; S.C. Roșia Montană Gold Corporation S.A., 2006), it prevented an actual de-facto closure<sup>8</sup>.

This bureaucratic limbo – RMGC having a mining license but not actually doing any mining – meant that the de-facto closure process never commenced (S. D. Roth, personal communication, May 3, 2024), essentially leaving Cetate Quarry abandoned (Ștefănescu & Alexandrescu, 2020). However, the villagers of Roșia Montană awaited the reopening of the mining sector, which never materialized, exacerbating socio-economic instability and decreasing social cohesion (Mureșan, 2011; S. D. Roth, personal communication, May 3, 2024, personal communication, June 29, 2024; Țimonea, 2015). This instability stems from a lack of investments in alternative economic activities, as people's reliance on RMGC's services stunted the development of the area for decades (Goțiu, 2024a). This dependency created a structural vulnerability, as the economic benefits of the mining project – anticipated by decision-makers – never came about, essentially resulting in widespread uncertainty and disillusionment (Botezan et al., 2020).

The erosion of traditional social structures and an insufficiency of cohesive community efforts further complicate the path to recovery (Botezan et al., 2020; Leonte, 2018; Ștefănescu & Alexandrescu, 2020). This is especially problematic because fractured communities face significant challenges in rebuilding trust and unity, let alone being able to pursue common sustainability goals and adapting to new economic realities (Uslaner, 2016). Thus, to overcome present challenges, it is crucial to deconstruct the mining-dependent narratives and build new

---

<sup>7</sup> Technical term meaning rehabilitation or restoration.

<sup>8</sup> A de-facto closure of a mine refers to the practical and complete shutdown of mining operations, including environmental remediation and socio-economic transition for the local community (Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining & University of Queensland, n.d.). This involves cleaning up environmental damage, repurposing mining infrastructure, and providing sustainable economic alternatives, as opposed to merely transferring administrative control without addressing these critical issues.

frameworks that can foster collaboration and cohesion. This involves not only pushing for economic diversification, but also the revitalization of cultural and social practices that reinforce community bonds (Goțiu, 2024a).

### 1.3 Knowledge Gap

Despite the significant implications of the improper mine closure in Roșia Montană (Ștefănescu & Alexandrescu, 2020), there is a substantial knowledge gap in understanding how these events have affected the community's social dynamics. Existing research on social life (Alexandrescu, 2020; Leonte, 2018; Stanculescu, 2012; Tiganea & Vigotti, 2022) has primarily focused on the polarized opinions and positions within the community, relocation and resettlement, and economic outlooks, but few have thoroughly explored the broader changes over time (Sevastre, 2017) – for example aspects of belonging, emotions and cohesion. Moreover, the issue of clashing/diverging local imaginaries at local level has not been studied much beyond what drove the protests (Pop, 2008), only Sevastre (2017) indirectly touching upon this. This oversight leaves a critical knowledge gap about the current abilities of the community to self-organize around a specific vision for the development of the region.

The above knowledge gap is linked especially to the concept of collective imagination – the mental frameworks, stories and narratives that shape people's perception and experiences (Feola et al., 2023) – which is not fully understood by literature in relation to social cohesion. Furthermore, there is a limited understanding of what happens when social and imaginative capacities are intentionally dismantled. In this thesis, this specific phenomenon of dismantling will be referred to as imagination deinfrastructuring and will be further explained in the discussion section. This involves examining the challenges communities face when their foundational infrastructures are removed or degraded and how they navigate these challenges to rebuild social cohesion and collective imagination. Thus, this thesis sets out to keep this knowledge gap in mind when investigating the case of Roșia Montană

Addressing this knowledge gap is essential for fostering social cohesion, which is crucial for the community's ability to navigate challenges, pursue common goals, and adapt to changing circumstances (Chan et al., 2006; Uslaner, 2016). This is highly important for the future of Roșia Montană, considering the most recent developments regarding the ICSID case and the revocation of RMGC's mining license (Agenția Națională pentru Resurse Minerale, 2024; Dumitru, 2024).

## 1.4 Research Aims

This thesis aims to fill the above gap by examining the historical dismantling of the social fabric in Roșia Montană and understanding the link between collective imagination to social cohesion. This will be done in relation to the social changes that took place due to the entrance of the RMGC project, with a specific focus on understanding how RMGC's operations and the improper closure of Cetate Quarry have affected the community. To achieve this aim, the following objectives are pursued:

- a) To investigate past and current states of community cohesion in Roșia Montană, in congruence with collective imagination, in order to map out imaginaries;
- b) To challenge existing literature on imaginaries and collective imagination, especially in relation to the importance of social cohesion;
- c) To provide recommendations on ways to strengthen social cohesion in Roșia Montană.

## 1.5 Research Questions

The three research questions are thus as follows:

*How have historical events, socio-economic factors, and power dynamics in the past century, and more specifically the past three decades, influenced the formation and evolution of local imaginaries in Roșia Montană?*

*How do diverging perspectives within the community shape local development nowadays, and what implications does this have for social cohesion?*

*Which strategies and approaches could strengthen social cohesion in Roșia Montană looking forwards?*

## 1.6 Research Framework

Practically, this research project entailed five distinct steps which made it possible to answer the research questions and fulfil the objectives, as pictured in *Figure 3*. First, a review on the most relevant literature was conducted, in parallel with an in-depth historical analysis of the events in Roșia Montană. This was used in the second step, namely the development of the conceptual framework. The third step comprised of fieldwork activities for data collection, which was then interpreted and applied onto the conceptual framework as the fourth activity.



The final step of this process was writing up recommendations for the representatives of the bottom-up initiatives.

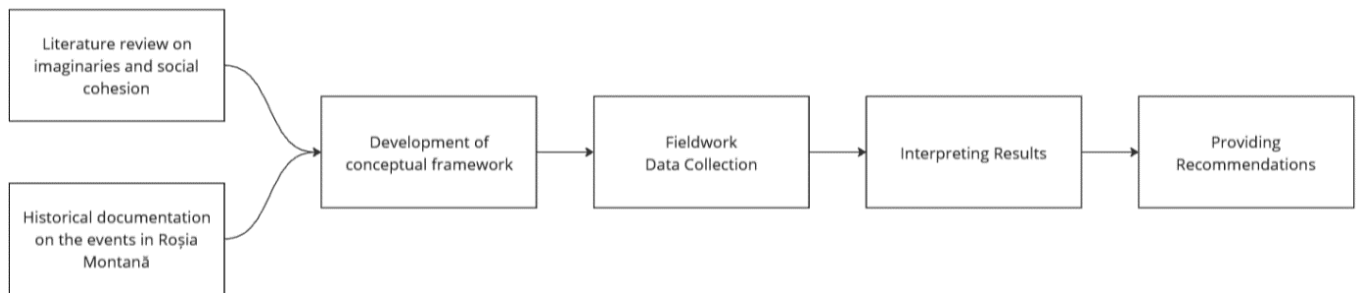


Figure 3 Research Framework (source: own work)

## 1.7 Scientific and Societal Relevance

In addressing the research gap identified in my thesis, I make several specific contributions to both theory and societal application. From a theoretical standpoint, this thesis proposes an integrative framework that links the concepts of collective imagination and social cohesion, elucidating how the two interact and influence each other. This linkage offers a nuanced approach for understanding how communities envision and strive towards the future, considering their local circumstances and realities. Furthermore, this research project will deepen the theoretical foundations of futuring literature by including knowledge from non-Western contexts. By introducing the concept of imagination deinfrastructuring in the later sections, the thesis provides a novel lens through which to understand the deliberate dismantling of imaginative elements that support a social system. This concept is particularly insightful for understanding how external forces, such as corporate interests, can disrupt community cohesion and imaginative capacities.

The societal relevance of this study is equally significant. The findings provide practical recommendations for policymakers and community leaders in post-industrial and economically transitioning regions. These recommendations focus on enhancing social cohesion and fostering sustainable development, which are crucial for communities like Roșia Montană that are navigating their post-mining future. My thesis also underscores the role of grassroots movements and community activism in rebuilding social cohesion and envisioning sustainable futures, serving as an example for other communities worldwide. Finally, development practitioners can use the theoretical framework developed here, alongside other tools, to identify key areas for intervention to support social cohesion and community-led development. This will hopefully raise awareness of the importance of harmonious collaborations between

policymakers, community leaders, and residents in fostering resilient and sustainable communities.



## 2. Theoretical Foundations

This chapter presents the theoretical foundation of the research project, elaborating on the key theories and concepts that have been crucial in conducting the study. The first section explains the idea of social cohesion, detailing its dimensions and the factors that contribute to strong, cohesive communities. Next, the chapter introduces the concept of collective imagination, exploring how communities envision their future and the role of shared narratives and aspirations in fostering social cohesion. Following this, the concept of imagination infrastructuring will be discussed, highlighting how deliberate efforts to support imaginative practices can foster social cohesion and community development. Finally, the chapter integrates these concepts into a cohesive theoretical model, illustrating the dynamic interplay between social cohesion, collective imagination, and imagination infrastructuring. This model serves as the foundation for the empirical analysis conducted in the subsequent chapters, offering a structured approach to understanding the complex socio-cultural dynamics at play in historical mining regions like Roşia Montană.

### 2.1 Social Cohesion and Collective Imagination

#### 2.1.1 Social Cohesion and its dimensions

Social cohesion refers to the strength and quality of relationships and the sense of solidarity among members of a community or in the wider society (Chan et al., 2006; Orazani et al., 2023). It is characterised by mutual trust, a sense of belonging, and the willingness of individuals to cooperate and work together towards common goals (Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017). This bond serves as foundation for social stability, resilience, and well-being, influencing various aspects of communal life, including governance, economic prosperity and cultural vitality (Adetunji et al., 2023; Cancellieri et al., 2018). According to Schiefer & van der Noll (2017), social cohesion encompasses several key dimensions: social relations, attachment/belonging, orientation towards the common good, shared values, (in)equality, and the subjective/objective quality of life.

These dimensions are not isolated but interconnected, forming the intricate fabric of social cohesion. Sub-categories within each dimension serve as building blocks that further enhance the overall cohesion within communities (Adetunji et al., 2023; Delhey et al., 2023; Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017). For example, trust fosters reliability and cooperation among community members, while a sense of belonging instils feelings of inclusivity and connectedness. Additionally, solidarity promotes unity and mutual support, reinforcing the

collective identity and sense of belonging within the community. Together, these sub-categories contribute to a cohesive social fabric that strengthens community resilience and fosters a shared sense of purpose and belonging.

The dimensions of social cohesion, as proposed by Schiefer and van der Noll (2017), align well with those of social capital<sup>9</sup> presented by Saukani and Ismail (2019), which include elements like trust, reciprocity, and cooperation. This is in line with Cloete’s (2014) argument that social cohesion and social capital are indeed closely related. However, Saukani and Isamil (2019) add the dimension of spirituality to the discussion, which extends our understanding of social cohesion beyond purely material and transactional realms. Spirituality, often manifested through religious practices, cultural traditions, and collective rituals, serves as a potent bonding agent within communities (Stacey, 2019). It strengthens social ties, fosters collective identity, and imbues individuals with a sense of purpose and moral guidance. Thus, spirituality stands as an integral component that enriches our understanding of social cohesion, offering a deeper insight into the symbolic and cultural dimensions of community life, especially for rural areas (Hemming, 2018).

Table 1 summarizes the key dimensions of social cohesion, complemented by Saukani & Ismail’s work, highlighting the various aspects that contribute to the strength and quality of relationships within communities. This will be later used to qualitatively understand the current state of social cohesion in Roşia Montană in the results section.

*Table 1 Dimensions of Social Cohesion*

<b><i>Dimension</i></b>	<b><i>Description</i></b>
<i>Attachment/Belonging</i>	The sense of connection and belonging towards a community or society;
<i>Social Relations</i>	Interactions and connections between individuals within a community or society, including friendships and networks;
<i>Spirituality</i>	The presence of religious practices, cultural traditions, and collective rituals that foster bonding and identity within a community;
<i>Shared Values</i>	Commonly held beliefs, principles, and norms that unite members of a community or society;
<i>Orientation towards Common Good</i>	The willingness of individuals to cooperate and contribute towards the collective well-being and goals of the community;
<i>(In)Equality</i>	The distribution of resources, opportunities, and benefits within a community or society;

<sup>9</sup> “The networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively” (Oxford Dictionary, 2020).

### 2.1.2 The Role of Collective Imagination

Social cohesion is not solely determined by present circumstances but is shaped by a blend of historical events, power dynamics, and socio-economic factors, collectively influencing how individuals collectively interact, cooperate, and resolve conflicts (Dash & Thilagam, 2023). These historical legacies, whether consciously or subconsciously present in people’s everyday life, create a complex backdrop against which social relationships and community dynamics unfold. Integral to this process is collective imagination, as highlighted by Cantó-Milà & Seebach (2024).

Collective imagination refers to the shared creative capacity of a group of people to envision, dream, and conceptualise ideas, scenarios, or futures together (Haldane & Choukeir, 2022). The significance of collective imagination in social cohesion lies in its ability to foster a sense of belonging, solidarity, and shared identity among community members. When engaging in collective imagination, individuals contribute to the co-creation of a shared narrative that reflects their aspirations, values, and collective goals. This shared narrative serves as a binding force that unites diverse individuals within the community, fostering empathy, understanding, and cooperation (Jovchelovitch & Hawlina, 2018).

Following Jovchelovitch & Hawlina (2018), in the process of envisioning and creating shared narratives, community members collaborate to articulate their collective vision for the future. This collaborative process involves pooling together diverse perspectives, experiences, and aspirations, often through dialogue, storytelling, or creative expression. Through this exchange, individuals merge their individual ideas to construct a collective vision that resonates with the community’s identity and values. Collective imagination is often observed, in its active form, in contexts like community planning, grassroots initiatives, as well as “softer” circumstances such as cultural productions, where group synergy creates new and innovative concepts (Baibarac-Duignan & Medeşan, 2023; Zittoun & Gillespie, 2018).

The role of collective imagination in shaping social cohesion, as explained above, underscores its immediate and collaborative nature, focusing on short-term innovation and community engagement. However, the long term is governed by the concept of imaginaries,

which provides long-lasting frameworks that guide societal practices and institutions (Jasanoff & Kim, 2015).

### 2.1.3 Collective Imagination vs. Imaginaries

This section will briefly differentiate between short-term imaginative processes and long-term societal imaginaries, providing a comprehensive understanding of how they shape community identity and action. While collective imagination is dynamic and responsive to immediate needs and challenges, imaginaries represent deeper cultural, ideological, and institutional constructs that shape collective beliefs, norms, and behaviours, as well as the sense of hope, over time (Feola et al., 2023; Jasanoff & Kim, 2015). Imaginaries encompass broader societal narratives, ideologies, and paradigms that influence how individuals perceive reality, make sense of their world, and navigate social interactions (Argüelles et al., 2017; Feola, 2019; Feola et al., 2023). An example of an imaginary is the American Dream, which embodies ideals of freedom, prosperity, and success through hard work, shaping American culture, policy, and individual aspirations (Samuel, 2012). Thus, imaginaries are both products of and contributors to social systems (Jasanoff, 2001) - individuals draw upon their personal experiences, beliefs, and cultural backgrounds to construct their imaginative frameworks (Anderson, 2006), and, simultaneously, individual imaginaries are constantly shaped and influenced by the broader socio-cultural context in which they exist (Jasanoff, 2001).

Because imaginaries are deeply embedded in socio-economic structures and power dynamics, they tend to reflect and perpetuate existing inequalities and (in)justices (Gibson-Graham, 2006). These enduring imaginaries often become foundational elements of societal identity, shaping collective beliefs, norms, and practices over extended periods (Jasanoff & Kim, 2015). However, other imaginaries may have a more limited lifespan, particularly in rapidly changing or transitional societies. According to Jasanoff & Kim (2015), shifts in cultural values, technological advancements, political upheavals, or economic transformations can contribute to the erosion or replacement of existing imaginaries with new ones. In such cases, imaginaries may persist for decades or generations before being supplanted by emerging narratives, ideologies, or paradigms that better reflect the evolving needs and aspirations of society (Feola, 2019). This means that imaginaries are a lot harder to change in comparison to short-term imaginative processes, which people use to adapt to changing circumstances.

The interplay between collective imagination and imaginaries becomes of uttermost importance when grasping how communities form their identity, and how external or internal

shocks can reshape their social structures, including cohesion (Medina, 2013). Imaginaries shape the ways in which individuals perceive their roles and opportunities within society, which in turn influences their level of participation in communal activities and decision-making processes within collective imagination (Fracaro, 2010). Reversely, individuals are often motivated when shared visions of the future and common goals emerge, guiding their actions and engagement within the community (Feola et al., 2023; McBride, 2005).

## 2.2 Untangling Collective Imagination

How can abstract conceptualisations such as collective imagination and imaginaries be studied in practical terms? To answer this question, this section aims to explore the underlying components that form these abstract concepts – because they do not emerge from nowhere.

### 2.2.1 Imagination Materials

Robinson (2023b) introduces the concept of imagination materials, which are the diverse sources of inspiration that people draw upon to envision and create new ideas, visions, and possibilities for the future. They are based on things such as future aspirations, community relationships, cultural heritage, and ecological wisdom, as well as civic spaces, community bodies or social infrastructure. Robinson conceptualises imagination materials as elements which can expand the boundaries of imagination and which can create novel connections between the past, present, and future (Robinson, 2023a). In other words, imagination materials serve as the building blocks that weave together a rich tapestry of tangible and intangible structures within society (Vervoort, 2023).

Just as social cohesion relies on interconnected dimensions to foster mutual trust, solidarity, and cooperation within a community, imagination materials act as the foundational elements that expand the boundaries of imagination and create novel connections between the past, present, and future (Robinson, 2023a). The intersections between the two concepts are multifaceted and deeply interwoven, as they mutually reinforce and interact with each other through the formation of the collective imaginary. For instance, strong social relations and a sense of belonging would enable communities to draw on their cultural heritage as imagination materials, essentially envisioning a future that honours the past while innovating for the future (Felt, 2015). Another example is that civic spaces, community bodies, and social infrastructure – key components of imagination materials – are both a product of and a contributor to social cohesion (Aelbrecht & Stevens, 2019). Such tangible and intangible assets, which are in many ways synonymous with cultural heritage (Murzyn-Kupisz & Działek, 2013), provide the



venues and networks necessary for community members to interact, collaborate, and co-create, thereby strengthening mutual trust and belonging; in turn, a cohesive social fabric makes it easier to sustain and expand these assets. While imagination materials encompass a broader range of elements, including innovative and contemporary contributions, they align closely with cultural heritage because both serve to preserve and engage with a community's historical and cultural identity (Alves, 2018; O. Apostol et al., 2023; Hassan, 2020; Holtorf, 2018; Ilieş et al., 2021; Vervoort, 2023).

Because imagination materials serve as a starting point for discussing and exploring collective imagination in this thesis, descriptions of each of the six materials proposed by Robinson (2023b) are presented below.



❖ Relationships/Community Bodies: The strength and diversity of relationships within a community influences the construction of a collective within which an imaginary can emerge and develop (Sanghera & Thapar-Björkert, 2012). Community bodies, such as local organisations, grassroots movements, and informal networks serve as platforms for dialogue, collaboration, and collective envisioning, enriching the communities through diverse perspectives and lived experiences (Vannebo & Ljunggren, 2021)



❖ Civic Spaces, Social, and Economic Infrastructure: Civic spaces, along with social and economic infrastructure, constitute essential forms of social capital that shape the physical and social environment in which collective imaginaries are nurtured and enacted (Dash & Thilagam, 2023; Jenlink, 2007). These can be public spaces, community centres, or cultural institutions for collective gatherings, cultural expression, and civic engagement, or can take the shape of education, healthcare, and economic opportunities (Drozynski & Beljaars, 2019).



❖ The Natural World and the More-Than-Human: Acknowledging the intrinsic value of nature and the interconnectedness of all living beings enriches collective imaginaries with ecological wisdom (Sarabi et al., 2023). This can happen through different channels: formal education, oral tradition, pastoral agricultural practices, spirituality etc. Cultivating a deep appreciation for the more-than-human realm fosters a sense of interconnectedness and reciprocity, inspiring collective efforts to protect and regenerate ecosystems for present and future generations (Barrett et al., 2017).



- ❖ Ancestors, Myths, and Histories of Place: Ancestral wisdom, mythologies, and local histories serve as repositories of collective memory and cultural heritage, enriching the imagination materials with diverse narratives and worldviews (Stacey, 2019). This connects individuals to their cultural roots, instilling a sense of pride, continuity, and belonging within the community (Bifulco & Tirino, 2018). Through the (re)interpretation of ancestral stories and historical narratives, communities reimagine their past, present, and future trajectories, drawing strength and inspiration from the resilience and ingenuity of their predecessors (Murzyn-Kupisz & Działek, 2013).



- ❖ The Land and the Metaphorical Soil: The land, along with its cultural significance and historical narratives, constitutes a foundational form of social capital that shapes collective identity and belonging (Bass, 2003). The metaphorical soil represents the cultural heritage, ancestral knowledge, and sense of place that anchor individuals within their communities and provide a sense of continuity across generations (Perley, 2020). It differs from the previous material because of its relationship with the physical environment, as relations to the land can also be influenced by past injustices and environmental change (Albrecht et al., 2007).



- ❖ Future Generations: This material can be interpreted as a driver for considering the effect of our past and current actions upon generations that are either not yet in decision-making positions or are yet to be born (Weiss, 1992). This fosters a sense of responsibility and collective investment in shaping the trajectory of the communities we live in (Shahen et al., 2021)

One cannot deny the similarities between the components of social cohesion and the imagination materials: the latter are the foundational elements which allow people to come together through shared identity and common lived experiences, in line with other related studies (Andreotti et al., 2012; Carrasco & Bilal, 2016; Desjardins et al., 2002; Farkas, 2021; Jeannotte, 2010). But how do imagination materials show up and change throughout time?

### 2.2.2 Shifts in Imaginaries

Imaginaries are never static and are always contextual, meaning they can only be properly studied in (relative) transformation. Albeit seemingly daunting, intentional changes in imaginaries can be facilitated, and therefore studied, through specific frameworks. Cassie Robinson (2022) has introduced a concept describing what supports imagination within social groups: **imagination infrastructuring**.

**Imagination infrastructuring** can be defined as the **deliberate and sustained process** of establishing and nurturing the necessary elements that support a particular initiative over time by making use of the imagination materials related to the said initiative (Robinson, 2023b; Vervoort, 2022, 2023, 2024).

Imagination infrastructuring prioritises long-term transformation as it targets collective imagination and memory through the imagination materials. This process is an essential step

**Imagination infrastructures** encompasses certain key dimensions which ground communities to their lived realities: **sense-making, content creation, developing practices and sites of practice, archives, relational and resource infrastructures** (Robinson, 2023b). They actively support communities through deliberate efforts to facilitate and scaffold engagement, reflection and further collaboration among members. When implemented, they promote collaboration and exchange among diverse stakeholders, enabling the cross-pollination of ideas, perspectives, and experiences (Hebinck et al., 2018; Vervoort, 2022, 2024).

in sustainability transitions as a change in leverage points, according to Feola et al. (2023). Other development initiatives may prioritise tangible outputs or measurable outcomes, whereas infrastructuring targets cohesion and shared purpose within communities. In other words, it is a commitment to weave in the social fabric through purposeful interventions that make use of the materials already present or possible to be developed (Robinson, 2023a).

Such interventions – which represent specific actions, frameworks or resources that facilitate imaginative practices – are called **imagination infrastructures** (Oldham, 2021; Robinson, 2023a). Oldham (2021) explains them as follows:

*“When combined, though, the amalgam ‘imagination infrastructure’ evokes more than the sum of its two parts. Three possible meanings arise when we bring together these two very different words. First, an infrastructure which supports the use and development of*

*the skill and faculty of imagination; second, a process or methodology involving the use of imaginative faculties to design new infrastructure; and third, a description of the way certain forms of sociotechnical imaginaries are embodied in physical infrastructures.”* (Oldham, 2021)

The framework of imagination infrastructuring overall involves a nuanced consideration of both the temporal aspect and the transitional nature of imaginaries as they unfold, allowing for adaptation and reflection every step of the way (Oldham, 2021; Vervoort, 2023). As imaginative ideas and visions change over time, infrastructures allow communities to create the necessary foundation to securely become able to adopt a forward-thinking stance while preserving their core identity (Dash & Thilagam, 2023). A practical example of what Oldham and Robinson mean is given in *Info Box 2* below.

#### **Info Box 2: *Viscri (I)***

A suitable example, not too far away from Roşia Montană, is from the village of Viscri in Romania, a UNESCO World Heritage Site famous for its Saxon heritage and blue houses. Viscri has a strong and unique cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, specific for Saxon settlements in Transylvania (Corsale & Iorio, 2014), making up the *Imagination Materials*. The heritage conservation initiatives of the past decade, such as the restoration of traditional Saxon houses and the promotion of local crafts (Condrea, 2015), each an imagination infrastructure on its own, together make up the *Imagination Infrastructuring*.



(Photos by Asociația Monumentum, 2015)

### 2.3 A Framework on the Interplay between Imagination and Social Cohesion

The interplay between social cohesion and imagination is precisely illustrated by Fonseca et al. (2019). While initially only conceived as a framework for understanding social cohesion holistically, their model in fact also reveals how imaginaries intertwine with community identities and aspirations. The authors thus demonstrate that social cohesion is also very much about the narratives and visions that we tell ourselves, and how they guide interactions and behaviours. This offers a holistic perspective on how to study communities of any kind, because it highlights the role of personal narratives in the context of belonging to a collective.

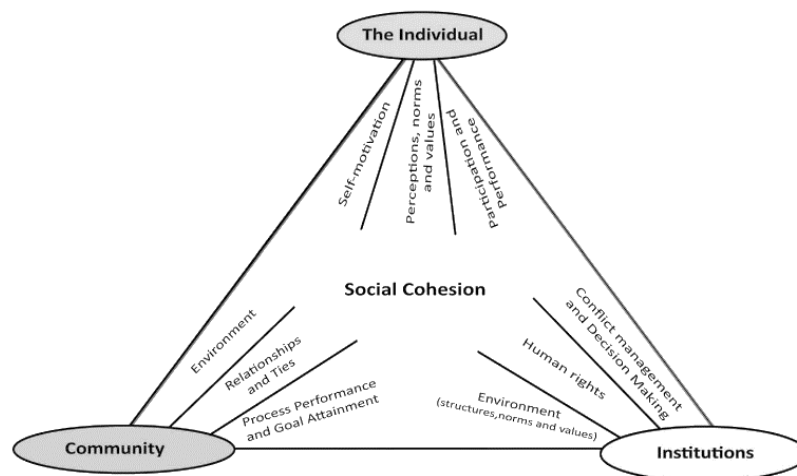


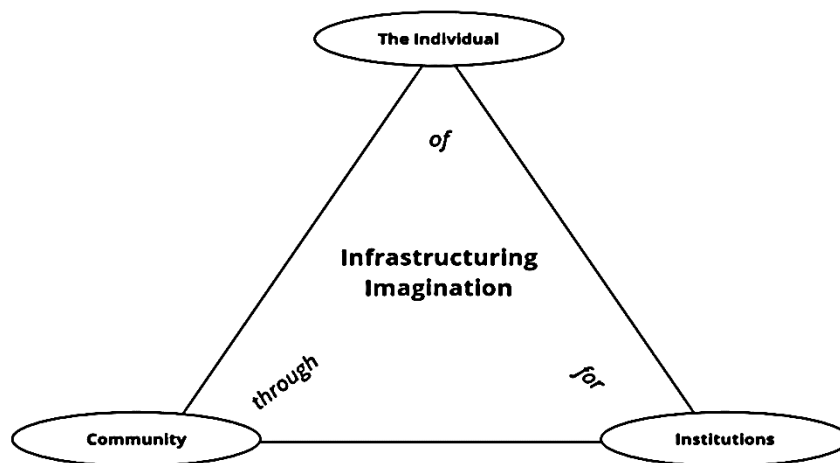
Figure 4 Framework characterizing social cohesion by Fonseca et al. (2019)

As Figure 4 points, to first breakdown the original framework of Fonseca et al. (2019), we start off with the individual level, which states that perceptions of belonging, trust, and shared values contribute to the development of collective imaginaries, influencing group cohesion through each person's lived experience, also supported by Schiefer & van der Noll (2017). Next, the community layer emphasises that informal networks and shared cultural identities are fundamental to fostering social cohesion and shaping collective imaginaries within communities, and are rooted in common traditions and goals (Caxaj & Kolol Qnan Tx'otx' Parroquia de San Miguel Ixtahuacan, 2018; Dash & Thilagam, 2023).

Next, the institutional layer highlights that formal structures, policies, and organisations that govern societal interactions and disseminate institutional imaginaries, influencing public perceptions and behaviours. Their definition delves into the cultural, social, and psychological dimensions of community dynamics, exploring how shared beliefs, values, and experiences contribute to the formation of collective narratives and ultimately influence social cohesion, whereas governance theory often focuses more narrowly on the formal rules and structures of

governance (Osei-Tutu et al., 2015). *Figure 4* shows the interactions between the three layers, which complement and depend on each other precisely as desired in imagination infrastructuring.

At the same time, it is worth mentioning that imagination infrastructuring is not necessarily new in literature, although not being called as such until recently. A brief literature review revealed that imagination infrastructuring affects imagination at individual, institutional and community level (Cancellieri et al., 2018; Eisenhauer, 2023; Lillard & Taggart, 2019; Lopata et al., 2005; Milkoreit, 2017; Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017; Waller, 2020), in line with how collective cohesion has been presented previously through the framework of Fonseca et al. (2019). We are now going to combine the knowledge on the layers of social cohesion and imagination infrastructuring under one framework as follows, as shown in *Figure 5* below. However, one significant difference is that while in the case of social cohesion the three layers support and depend on each other, for infrastructuring the triangle shows that an intervention on one category may have an impact on another, strengthening the effect of the intervention through empowerment. This is succinctly showed in *Figure 5*, before diving into more detail below:



*Figure 5 The Layers of Imagination Infrastructuring – the IIC framework (source: own work)*

### 2.3.1 The Individual Layer: Infrastructuring of Imagination

The first layer aligns with the idea of an infrastructure that supports and nurtures the use and development of imagination within the individual (Oldham, 2021). It focuses on the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions of individuals within a community, emphasising factors such as their sense of belonging, trust in others, and willingness to cooperate (Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017). Here, infrastructure supports and nurtures the use

and development of imagination for each and every person, fostering creative thinking and imaginative capacities, contributing how people can think of realities other than their own (Hargrave, 2009). This layer depends on educational systems, cultural institutions, and societal structures to create environments conducive to nurturing creative thinking (Hillmann, 2004).

For example, Montessori schools incorporate arts, music, and literature into their curricula, which helps students develop their imaginative and creative skills (Soundy, 2009). The Montessori method emphasises self-directed activity, hands-on learning, and collaborative play, allowing children to explore their interests at their own pace (Lillard & Taggart, 2019). This approach nurtures academic achievement, by encouraging students to engage in imaginative play and critical thinking, essential for the development of individual imagination and creativity (Lopata et al., 2005).

### 2.3.2 The Community Layer: Infrastructuring through Imagination

This layer is based on the idea that an imaginative system transforms itself over time from within (Jasanoff & Kim, 2015). Shared traditions, (cultural) practices, and collective memories contribute to the cohesion and resilience of communities over time, shaping their collective identity and sense of belonging (Feola et al., 2023). It emphasises that the development of infrastructure is influenced and shaped by imagination, just as the other way around (Eisenhauer, 2023; Jasanoff & Kim, 2015). This is explained by the process-oriented nature of infrastructure (Oldham, 2021), which means that both the imaginary and the infrastructure it is built upon can become socially performative (Oomen et al., 2022). This, in turn, kickstarts a chain of changes of how the system views itself and where it is heading, eventually transforming itself into something else over time (Herbert, 2021; Milkoreit, 2017).

In practice, this layer is represented by community-driven questioning of the status quo, envisioning novel solutions to emerging challenges, and incorporating creative design thinking into areas where it was previously absent (Milkoreit, 2017; Waller, 2020). The collective component lies in how these imaginative processes and infrastructures are shared, maintained, and evolved by the community, fostering social cohesion and a shared sense of purpose. As examples, community theatres and public libraries play a crucial role in fostering imagination, which provide access to a wide range of cultural and creative resources. Community theatres often host plays, workshops, and events that allow participants to engage in storytelling and performance, stimulating imaginative capacities (Lacko, 2014). Public libraries, on the other hand, offer programs such as creative writing workshops, book clubs, and art classes, creating



inclusive spaces where individuals can continue education outside of the classroom environment and engage in creative pursuits (Krolak, 2005; Papcunová et al., 2017). These examples demonstrate how infrastructuring imagination at the collective level can create environments that nurture creativity, fostering a sense of belonging and community cohesion through shared imaginative experiences.

### 2.3.3 The Institutional Layer: Infrastructuring for Imagination

This layer captures the idea of infrastructure designed with the purpose of facilitating imaginative processes through institutions (Oldham, 2021). Institutions contribute to the construction and dissemination of collective imaginaries through their policies, cultural representations, and social narratives, thus influencing social cohesion at a broader scale (O'Brien, 2019). Infrastructure at this level supports the development of collective imaginaries through networks, relationships, and shared experiences that bind individuals together. This highlights infrastructure's crucial role in facilitating and enabling the expression of imagination in various participative ways, shaping the opportunities and constraints faced by individuals and communities (Schmidt et al., 2014).

Here, the individual becomes part of a collective where ideas are shared, brainstormed and acted upon in togetherness (Hargrave, 2009; Patalano, 2007). In addition to the above, the institutional layer also influences the cultural aspects of everyday life, which includes the habitual practices, routines and ways of thinking and behaving that define a group's daily existence (Burgess et al., 2006). Institutions shape these mundane aspects through promoting norms, values and behaviours of a certain kind. For example, governmental policies, organizational practices, and community initiatives can impact collaboration, innovation, and creativity (Frey, 1999). Infrastructure for imagination may include the creation of dedicated creative spaces or programs – such as flexible work environments – that aim to harness problem-solving, innovation, or artistic expression (Moonesar et al., 2019).

One relevant example for this layer is illustrated by Cancellieri et al. (2018), namely the case of the municipality of Milan (Italy), which played a crucial role in promoting cultural entrepreneurship initiatives. Increasing its support to non-profit and for-profit organisations involved in (bottom-up) cultural projects aimed at social cohesion and consulting with its citizens, the municipality encouraged imaginative and creative ideas to flourish within the community. This collaborative approach between the municipality and local organisations

helped foster a culture of innovation and creativity in addressing social issues through arts and culture initiatives.

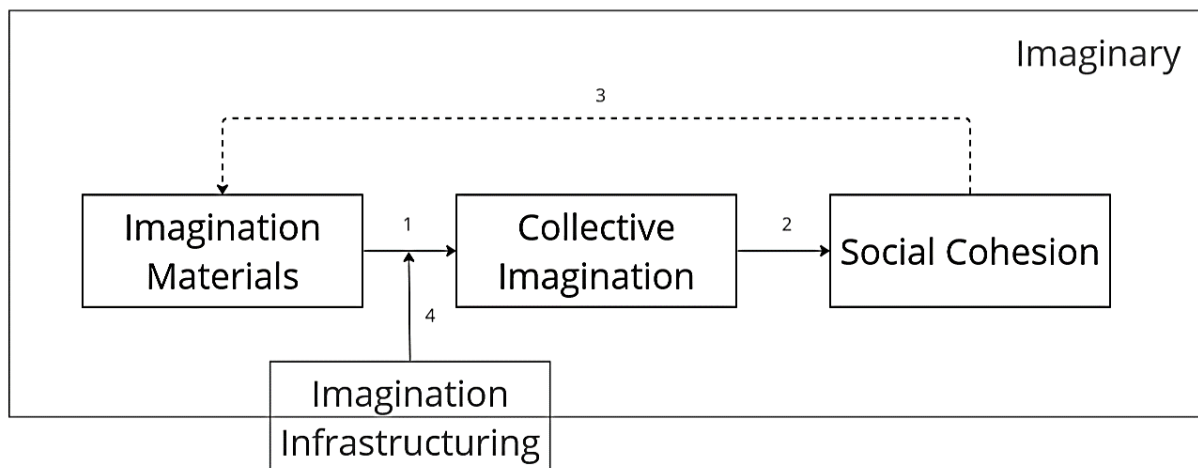
With an understanding of these concepts, they are systematically integrated into a model, presented in the next section.

## 2.4 Conceptual Model

Having delved into the theoretical underpinnings of this study, we can now synthesise the key concepts into a coherent conceptual framework in the first sub-section. Later, the limitations of such model will be explained in the second sub-section.

### 2.4.1 Visual Representation

Illustrated in *Figure 6*, the intricate interplay between the main concepts is shown at theoretical level, particularly highlighting the role of imagination infrastructuring as a catalyst for change within the feedback loop. The diagram explains how *Imagination Materials*, *Collective Imagination* and *Social Cohesion* co-create each other within the *Imaginary* and proposes how *Imagination Infrastructuring* affects this relationship. The interaction between *Imagination Materials*, *Collective Imagination*, and *Social Cohesion* creates a continuous loop that reinforces and enhances itself over time and is mediated by *Imagination Infrastructuring* as an element which facilitates and supports this positive cycle.



*Figure 6 Conceptual Framework (source: own work)*

*Figure 6* is explained below and ought to be interpreted in reference to the numbered elements. Due to the abstract nature of these concepts, the list will be followed by a practical example.

1. *Imagination Materials* are the building blocks that inform and shape *Collective Imagination*, shaping the narratives, aspirations, and visions of a community. The abundance and diversity of imagination materials significantly contribute to the emergence and evolution of collective imaginaries. These materials are influenced by various factors such as cultural traditions, social experiences, and creative expressions within the community.
2. *Collective Imagination* fosters *Social Cohesion* by providing a shared framework of meaning, identity, and purpose for community members. This shared framework promotes cooperation, solidarity, and trust among people, which are key elements of *Social Cohesion*. The strength of *Collective Imagination* is often dependent on how inclusive and representative it is of the community's diverse voices and experiences.
3. As *Social Cohesion* undergoes dynamic changes over time, it can influence the development or existence of *Imagination Materials*, either enhancing or deconstructing them in this process, thus exerting an impact on *Collective Imagination*. For instance, a strong sense of community and mutual support can lead to the creation of new imagination materials that reflect shared values and goals, while social fragmentation might lead to the erosion of existing materials. This shows the causal loop between the three concepts as they mutually influence and are influenced by each other.
4. *Imagination Infrastructuring* intentionally designs and creates supportive environments, processes and systems that facilitate *Collective Imagination*, building upon the existing *Imagination Materials*. It acts as a moderator between the *Imagination Materials* and *Collective Imagination* by ensuring that the necessary resources, spaces, and opportunities are available for imaginative thinking and expression. Moreover, it challenges existing imaginaries while working within existing structures, and is placed at the border of the *Imaginary* because of its nature. The success of imagination infrastructuring often depends on the involvement of community leaders, policymakers, and active community members who champion and support imaginative initiatives under conducive conditions.

*Info Box 3* below exemplifies this loop:

### Info Box 3: *Viscri (II)*

In Viscri, imagination infrastructures take the shape of training programs which have been designed for local residents to learn traditional crafts such as weaving, pottery and blacksmithing, as well as to learn how to restore traditional Saxon houses (Asociația Monumentum, 2015; Corsale & Iorio, 2014). These programs, sustained for more than 15 years by this point in time, all together make up a complex imagination infrastructuring plan, not only preserve cultural heritage – which makes up the imagination materials, together with contemporary elements such as transportation infrastructure or access to healthcare – but also strengthen community bonds and provide viable economic opportunities (Iorio & Corsale, 2014).

Thanks to these interventions, the *Collective Imagination*, which in the past was dominated by a narrative of economic fragility and isolation, has shifted towards a sustainable development path which revitalized the economic landscape of the village (The Council of Europe Faro Convention, 2022, p. 13). The main result has been the development of community-based tourism, through which Viscri has proven itself that intentional interventions, continuously sustained, can improve *Social Cohesion* over time. This effectively changed the long-term imaginary in which the Village is situated from one of poverty to one of prosperity (Corsale & Iorio, 2014; Reinoso & Kovács, 2017;

#### 2.4.2 Limitations of the Framework

While delving into the intricate dynamics of social cohesion and collective imaginaries, it becomes apparent that the existing theoretical frameworks, while insightful, have their limitations. The discourse in literature on imaginaries is most often future-oriented, prioritising an exploration of what could be, rather than what has been or how the present has been shaped by the past. Scholars in the field, most often coming from Western schools of thought, tend to focus on the potential of technological or social changes, trying to understand how these could reshape society in the future (Jasanoff & Kim, 2015), and rarely reflect on how structural historical conditions influence the possibilities for the future.

While this forward-looking perspective is highly understandable given the need for alternative development paths in the face of global challenges, it can lead to a disregard for the importance of historical contexts and how the past and the present are co-constitutive (Feola et al., 2023; Smith, 2012). Histories of colonization, industrialization, gender inequality, and other social disparities are often marginalized or repressed, creating a risk that problematic

power structures keep being reproduced into the future (Feola, 2019; Varvarousis, 2019). Moreover, much of the existing literature tends to concentrate on broader societal or global scales, yet there is a growing need to better understand the localized impacts of shifts in imaginaries, especially in terms of how they intersect with community identities, practices, and well-being – for example on social cohesion (Feola, 2019; Stokowski et al., 2021), especially in cases where injustices have been present (Davis & Hatuka, 2014).

For example, as communities decide to self-organize and oppose mining projects, they inherently start questioning the dominant neoliberal discourses and the related ideologies that allow extractivism in the first place (Conde, 2017). However, even as communities mobilize to resist external pressures and assert their own imaginaries, they can be confronted with disruptive forces that seek to dismantle these emerging narratives. These forces can manifest in various forms, including vested interests of powerful actors, structural inequalities, and ideological hegemonies that perpetuate the status quo (Avelino et al., 2023).

From the existing theory it becomes apparent that there is a positive causal loop between the main concepts. With this knowledge, the question then becomes: if Imagination Infrastructuring reinforces the loop into a virtuous cycle, does that mean that, in cases of existing injustices and structural inequalities, there is also an opposite intervention which turns the loop into a vicious one? Consequently, there arises a pressing need for further theoretical development to understand the historical conditions that have led to Imagination Deinfrastructuring of social cohesion. This not only acknowledges the historical legacies of capitalism and the unequal power dynamics inherent in peripheral regions (Špirić, 2018), but also elucidates the intricate relationships between imaginaries, social cohesion, and local development trajectories, which this thesis aims to address.



### 3. Methodology

This chapter provides a description of the methodological approach chosen for this research project. The exploratory nature of this research is grounded in an ethnographic approach, making use of qualitative research methods such as life story interviews and participant observation. This has been complemented by desk research throughout the duration of the project in order to ensure triangulation, aiming to investigate the links between social cohesion and imagination in depth.

The research period for this study was approximately nine months spanning from September 2023 up to and including July 2024. The fieldwork took place from mid-April to mid-June. When initially starting the project, the ICSID's decision had not yet been known, and on March 8th, 2024, it was announced that Gabriel Resources had lost the lawsuit they launched some years prior, to the win of the community. This, together with the local elections on June 9th, have changed the type of activities the villagers would focus on, and the ethnographic approach made it possible to attune the project accordingly.

#### 3.1 Ethnographic Approach

The relevance of investigating Roșia Montană as a case study extends beyond its local context to offer valuable insights into broader issues surrounding social cohesion in mining conflicts. First, it represents a poignant microcosm of the complexities surrounding industrial extractivism, their impact on local communities, as well as the power of activism when it comes to socio-political and environmental causes (Velicu, 2019). At the same time, the social movement associated to Roșia Montană's case has completely changed the trajectory of post-communist Romania, as it involved a multitude of actors with diverging interests and agendas (Soare & Tufiș, 2021).

The ethnographic approach was deemed most suitable for this study due to its emphasis on immersive data collection methods (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010), which allow for an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences and imaginaries at local level (Anderson-Levitt, 2006). Generally, ethnography enables the researcher to engage with the community on a personal level, gaining insights into lived experiences, social interactions, cultural practices, sense-making and meaning-making (Anderson-Levitt, 2006). To be more precise and specific, my research mainly focused on the village of Roșia Montană, but I have also interacted briefly with locals from the nearby villages part of the same commune.

Thus, fieldwork has been conducted within the community of Roșia Montană over the span of eight weeks, allowing for a genuine exploration of the social dynamics and social imaginaries which have emerged and developed over the past decades. During this period, I have immersed myself in the daily life of the villagers, participating in community events, engaging in informal conversations with residents, and observing social interactions in various contexts. Due to its crucial role within the community, on weekdays I would spend time at the local grocery shop, interacting with the owners as well as the customers, where I got to meet a diverse range of visitors, from villagers to trade workers and tourists. This proved to be one of the best ways to immerse myself into the social fabric itself, as I was able to experience firsthand how people interacted with each other and what their needs were. Next to this, each Sunday I would attend the Liturgy at the Greek-Catholic Church, which has been a great way to experience the religious side of the village within the institution itself, not only in the subtle ways in which spirituality showed up in daily life. Participant observation therefore provided opportunities to observe social dynamics in real time, uncovering implicit norms and power structures within the community.

Although not initially planned to overlap, the period which I have spent in Roșia Montană had partially coincided with the campaigns for the local elections. By the time the campaign started, I had already spent one month in the village and felt integrated well enough in the local community. At some point, I was asked by Mr. Tică Darie, who happened to be running for mayor and supported my research, whether I can help with certain logistical preparations for his own campaign – setting up meetings and distributing flyers. This deemed very valuable for my research, as it opened many new connections. People already knew what the purpose of my stay was, thus they felt comfortable with me collecting data through observations (no recordings were made during these interactions). Just as Anderson-Levitt (2006) suggested, by being there for the entire duration of the political campaign I have had the chance to experience this process unfolding and the social dynamics shifting. Throughout the fieldwork I kept an open mind and an observing stance, listening to people's stories and trying to understand the way they interpret the world, without preconceptions on my side.

However, due to the local elections taking place, the political arena was rather tensioned. Through my association with Mr. Darie meant that interactions with opposing political candidates were limited. Though his network I did have the opportunity to discuss with a few local council members from three different parties, but interviews with Mr. Furdui, the mayor, were also not conducted due to his availability.



## 3.2 Data Collection

Throughout the project, the following three data collection methods have been used:

### Desk Research

Extensive desk research was conducted to establish a comprehensive understanding of the historical context of Roșia Montană. Given the sudden surge in media attention surrounding the case starting in February 2024, both white and grey literature were consulted. This step was particularly crucial for gaining insights into the plans and activities of RMGC and understanding the broader socio-economic and environmental implications of the proposed mining project. The desk research also served as a valuable resource during interviews, enabling the researcher to navigate technical terminology and contextualize discussions within the larger socio-political landscape. However, it is worth noting that the quality of some RMGC reports and records raised questions, with derogatory language often present in official documents aimed at undermining concerns raised by individuals, activists, academics, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This turned out to be highly relevant for understanding the social dynamics on fieldwork, as these details were not only what had sparked the opposition but also what divided people so much due to their dual nature – on one hand seemingly professional, on the other hand belittling the local population. Thus, the desk research provided essential background information that informed subsequent data collection and analysis efforts, as well as increasing my understanding of the community's struggles while doing ethnography.

### In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted to capture the diverse narratives, experiences, and perspectives of individuals (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010). For this, the theory on imagination materials served as a starting point for formulating discussion topics and relating to the interviewee's lived experience. During the interviews, guiding questions were used to uncover the contextual nuances and to explore pivotal moments, challenges, and coping mechanisms within the community. While some of the interviews were unstructured, they not only helped refine the research focus in the initial stages of the project, but also to uncover discrepancies between the realities presented in existing literature and the actual lived experiences of community members. Additionally, the semi-structured interviews conducted aimed to cover specific topics and themes, providing a structured framework for discussion while allowing flexibility for participants to share their perspectives.

The participants represented diverse demographic backgrounds, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the research topic. A total of 22 in-depth interviews were conducted, with durations ranging from a minimum of 1 hour to over 5 hours, allowing for a rich exploration of participants' lives and perceptions. The selection of participants was done through a combination of purposive sampling and snowballing techniques (Naderifar et al., 2017), leveraging existing networks and relationships within the community to identify key informants and stakeholders. The interviewees comprised a diverse group of individuals, such as peasants, farmers, former miners, local business owners, activists, elders, educators and researchers. Most of these interviews were then followed up with shorter informal discussions throughout my stay. This approach facilitated the recruitment of participants who could provide valuable insights into the socio-cultural dynamics and collective imaginaries prevalent in Roșia Montană.

### Observations and Field Notes

Throughout my fieldwork, I actively engaged in participant observation and diligently taking field notes to capture the rich reality of community life. I documented my observations, conversations, and reflections whenever most convenient, either in on the spot or at the end of the day, written in a journal or through voice memos. These field notes were a valuable source of qualitative data, providing insights into how I experienced the nuanced dynamics of social

Examples of questions posed during interviews include:

- Can you tell me about your earliest memories related to mining in Roșia Montană?
- Can you describe the relationships you have with your neighbors and other community members?
- How has your family's history in this village influenced your views on mining?
- What do you wish for your children and grandchildren? What are some challenges the youth is facing?
- What are some places in your community where people often gather or socialize?
- How do you think access to things like education, healthcare, and jobs affects the sense of community in Roșia Montană?
- How would you describe the relationship between people and nature in Roșia Montană?
- Are there any stories or traditions passed down from previous generations that are important to you?
- What does the land mean to you personally, and how does it shape your sense of belonging in Roșia Montană?
- Can you describe any changes you've observed in the community over time, particularly in terms of social relationships and interactions?

The interviews were conducted in Romanian, and the subsequently transcribed and translated to English.

relationships and cultural particularities of the place. This has been crucial for interpreting and putting together information received from other sources, as the volume of information has been very large. They then allowed me to reflect onto certain aspects whenever they would come back in conversations, as well as having a detailed overview of how things evolved over the span of the two months.

### 3.3 Data analysis

Following the completion of data collection, I have processed the information through coding and thematic analysis in order to uncover key themes and patterns relevant to my research objectives (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010). This iterative process involved systematically organizing and categorizing the data, using imagination materials as codes for the topics of interest. This strategy ensured a holistic understanding of the social dynamics at play, providing insights into the chosen focus. To enhance the credibility and validity of my findings, I employed triangulation by cross-referencing multiple data sources from the desk research, as well as the data collected on fieldwork: interviews, observations, and field notes. This triangulation of data sources allowed me to corroborate and cross-validate key themes and insights, minimizing bias and increasing the reliability of my research findings (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010).

First, coding was conducted in several stages, following the steps presented by (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010, pp. 191–194). In the initial stage, I engaged in open coding, breaking down the data into discrete parts and closely examining them to identify initial concepts. Drawing inspiration from the imagination materials, I highlighted significant phrases and sentences related to the research questions. This initial coding helped to surface key ideas and themes that emerged from the participants' stories, field notes, and desk research. After the initial coding, I moved on to axial coding, which involved reassembling the data in new ways by making connections between the initial codes. The imagination materials served as a conceptual framework, guiding me in identifying relationships among the categories and subcategories. This stage focused on understanding how different codes related to one another and how they informed the broader themes of social cohesion, collective imagination, and imagination infrastructuring. In the final stage, I refined the analysis by focusing on the core categories that emerged as most significant to the research. This involved integrating and refining the categories to construct a coherent narrative that addressed the research questions. The imagination materials continued to provide a lens through which the data was interpreted,

ensuring that the final themes were deeply rooted in the community's collective imagination and the materials that shape it.

Thematic analysis was then carried out to uncover key themes and patterns relevant to the research objectives and research questions, with imagination infrastructuring and the framework on social cohesion serving as primary sources of inspiration. Going through the data involved multiple readings of the collected data to become deeply familiar with the content, context, and nuances. For this, I took detailed notes and highlighted passages that resonated with the concepts of imagination materials and social cohesion. Here, I identified and labelled segments of the data that were relevant to the research questions, drawing inspiration from imagination materials and social cohesion. Codes were created based on both the data itself and the theoretical framework guiding the study. For instance, codes related to imagination infrastructuring included themes like "local narratives," "cultural symbols," and "community initiatives", while codes related to social cohesion included "community trust," "shared values," and "collective identity". The next step involved grouping the initial codes into potential themes, looking for patterns and connections between the codes, based on their significance in explaining the phenomena under study. Lastly, I refined the themes to ensure they accurately represented the data. Some themes were merged, while others were split or discarded based on their relevance and prevalence. For example, themes like "community resilience" and "activism" were reviewed to see how they related to both imagination and social cohesion.

Throughout the data analysis process, I maintained a stance of reflexivity, continuously interrogating my assumptions, biases, and positionality. By critically reflecting on my own perspectives and experiences, I aimed to enhance the transparency and integrity of the research process. Additionally, I engaged in peer debriefing, seeking feedback and validation from colleagues and peers to further refine my interpretations and insights. Through these reflective practices, I endeavoured to mitigate potential sources of bias and ensure the trustworthiness of my research findings.

### 3.4 Ethics and Positionality Statement

Throughout the data collection process, careful attention was paid to ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for participants' autonomy. All interviews were conducted in a safe and supportive environment, with participants given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time. Data collection

efforts were guided by the principles of reflexivity and triangulation, ensuring the validity and reliability of the research findings. Overall, the life story interviews provided a rich and nuanced understanding of the social dynamics and collective imaginaries shaping the Roșia Montană community, laying the groundwork for subsequent data analysis and interpretation.

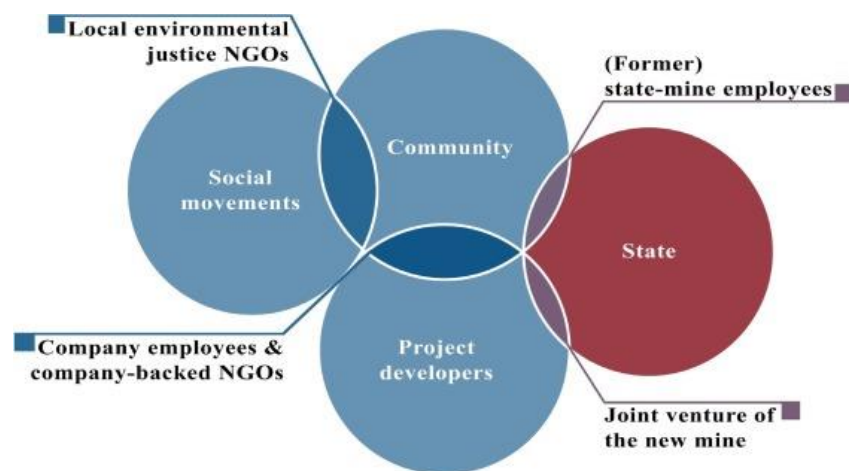
Being Romanian myself, albeit from a different region, and living abroad for many years now, I was able to bring a nuanced understanding of the local cultural context and the historical significance of Roșia Montană. This insider-outsider perspective (Naaeke et al., 2011) brought to the surface an important dynamic which allowed me to maintain my critical reflexivity regarding my own biases and ways of doing. In fact, I experienced certain (reverse) culture shocks during my stay, which were a useful learning experience on both academic and personal level as I discovered my home country in new ways than before. This sparked a deep curiosity in me, which made the process of untangling their imaginaries even more interesting during my interactions with the locals.

What is worth noting is that there is a significant (and influential) group of people in Roșia Montană who are not from this area specifically but moved here over time – mostly in solidarity with the mining opposition. This group turned out to be highly valuable for me, as they have experienced the changes within the community over the years while still having an insider-outsider perspective, bringing the subtle to the forefront.



## 4. Results

Before diving into the results collected, it is important to first visualize the main actors present nowadays in the Roșia Montană case. Depicted by Ștefănescu and Alexandrescu (2020) in *Figure 7* are the relationships between actors, including how they overlap or diverge in terms of being pro- or anti-RMGC. For example, while community comprises of activists, RMGC employees and Company-backed NGOs, as well as (former) state-mine employees, there are also villagers not associated with any of these other actors (Ștefănescu & Alexandrescu, 2020). The Euler diagram also shows that the social movements, the project developers and the state are a lot larger than what was visibly present in the village itself. This visualization is crucial because it highlights the complex interplay of interests and power dynamics that shape the community's socio-economic and political landscape, which I believe I have managed to cover rather well during my data collection.



*Figure 7 Euler Diagram of the relationships between actors in Roșia Montană, conceptualized by Ștefănescu & Alexandrescu (2020)*

### 4.1 Historical Background

The evolution of local imaginaries in Roșia Montană is closely intertwined with the historical events, socio-economic realities and power dynamics which have been developing, evolving and clashing. Similarly to the case of the Minnesota Iron Range mining area in the United States (Kojola, 2020), Roșia Montană has experienced (parallel) shifts in socio-technical imaginaries. On one hand, the introduction of industrial-scale, open-pit mining during the communist regime has shifted the focus from artisanal practices towards large-scale exploitation (Rus, 2021). This shift has facilitated the dominance of corporate interests in shaping development trajectories, at the expense of the local community's livelihoods and ecosystems. At the same time, a trend of moving away from extractivism and towards sustainable development and cultural preservation has slowly emerged over the past three decades, especially since 2013 (Velicu, 2019). This shift reflects broader global trends towards sustainability and community empowerment (Alexandrescu, 2020). However, narratives

propagated by proponents of the project, backed by state authorities and foreign investors, worked to delegitimize dissenting voices and marginalize these alternative imaginaries (Bouniol, 2013; B.-N. Mucea & Marina, 2022; Velicu, 2016). The sections below aim to explain these events in more detail.

#### 4.1.1 Up to and Including Communism

As one navigates the winding road through the dense forests of the Apuseni Mountains, scattered houses emerge amidst towering trees, leading to a village with asphalted roads, a school, multiple churches, and large houses – after all, Roșia Montană has always been a semi-urban rural settlement (Olteanu, 2019). At first glance, this infrastructure suggests a well-developed area benefiting from its historical mining glory. However, the initial impression of

##### **Info Box 4: An illustrious past**

Roșia Montană has been an important cultural, religious and economic center for different societies over the course of time, amongst which also the Dacians and the Romans (Hurezean, 2024; Olteanu, 2019; UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2018). Archaeological excavations uncovered ancient wax and wooden tablets from the Roman period, including one from February 6th, 131 A.D., which provides the earliest record of *Alburnus Maior*, the name under which the village was known back then (Ilovan, 2013; Olteanu, 2019). After the Romans retreated from Dacia in the late 3rd century, the site remained obscure for over a millennium until the Habsburg authorities reignited gold mining in the ancient Roman mines (Olteanu, 2019). After the Habsburg period, Roșia Montană underwent various phases of ownership and exploitation (Olteanu, 2019). The industrialization of the mining activities started around 1846, when special infrastructure was built to support the exploitation of resources and the population involved in the local economy (Țimonea, 2015a). In 2024, Roșia Montană celebrated 1893 years of existence (Goțiu, 2024a).

an illustrious past quickly gives way to a sense of abandonment and desolation, with cracks in the environment hinting at deeper issues. The current state of Roșia Montană, predominantly abandoned due to the displacement of hundreds of families by RMGC through property buyouts (Alexandrescu, 2020; Leonte, 2018; Stanculescu, 2012), presents a complex narrative for those unfamiliar with its historical context. Barna (2023) explains the vulnerable position in which the roșieni<sup>10</sup> have found themselves as follows:

*“Over the course of history, the inhabitants of Roșia Montană have little by little lost the rights over the treasures of the soil (Mining Law of 1854), then over the means of production (during communism) and finally over the right to live in this village (incompatible with the RMGC project). The common and individual goods went the same*

---

<sup>10</sup> Roșieni: people from Roșia Montană, which is also colloquially referred to as Roșia.

*way, firstly to solely benefit the State, then to benefit a multinational company.”*  
(Barna, 2023, p. 11)

To understand what is really going on in the village nowadays, we have to again go a bit back in time. The 20<sup>th</sup> century was very much synonymous with turbulent political and institutional changes, most of which did not benefit the roşieni (B.-N. Mucea, 2022). Until the Monarchy was abolished in Romania in December 1947, traditional artisanal practices and cultural industries that have historically been central to the community’s identity and economic livelihood (Institutul Naţional al Patrimoniului, 2016). This period, often referred to with a sense of pride and nostalgia, saw the village thrive economically and socially (Asociația Roșia Montană în Patrimoniul Mondial, 2024).

*“Our village never had a traditional costume, unlike most places. The roşieni would wear silk and lace, brought from Vienna – because they could afford it. I remember as a kid I was once gifted a pair of snakeskin boots. I wore them day and night, until they didn’t fit me anymore.”* (Interviewee #15, personal communication, May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024).

Elderly residents frequently recount stories of economic abundance, tight-knit community relations, and the bustling activity that mining brought to the area. For example, they still remember stories told by their parents of when gold served as a local currency in the village, integrating the community’s mining heritage directly into everyday transactions:

*“You’d buy your goods, and if you did not have the means to pay it on the spot they’d write you on a list. Then, when you finally found some gold, you’d come back to the store with your harvest – they would weigh the gold, see how many grams you’ve got there, then write off your debt. It was a clever way of collecting the gold because there’d be no intermediary.”* (Interviewee #13, personal communication, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024).

An abrupt shift happened during the communist regime<sup>11</sup>, when urbanisation and industrialisation was done forcefully and abruptly (Dumitrache et al., 2016) – especially under

---

<sup>11</sup> The Socialist Republic of Romania (1947-1989)



Nicolae Ceaușescu's rule<sup>12</sup>. The collectivisation<sup>13</sup> disrupted traditional livelihoods, such as smallholder farming, stripping peasants of their land (Barna, 2023; Iordachi & Dobrinu, 2009). For Roșia Montană, the consequences were deeply felt as they completely altered the community's identity: previously, the mines were owned by the locals, who had full control over the operations and management of the mine; now, the mines became state-owned (Bâlici, 2013; Rus, 2021). This loss was not merely economic but also cultural, severing ties to the land that symbolised heritage and sustenance, eroding community autonomy (Asociația Roșia Montană în Patrimoniul Mondial, 2024, Section The Starting Point; Bâlici, 2013).

Despite that, life in the village maintained a sense of cohesion, which the elderly generation nowadays refer to as “*a different Roșia Montană*”. This generation holds significant and vivid memories of a “*glorious past*” – one in which all the streets were busy and were beaming with life, having a farmers' market that gathered people from the entire area. This was also a time when movies were filmed in the historic town centre (see *Figure 8*) such as *The Stone Wedding* or *The Spirit of Gold* (Pița & Veroiu, 1974a, 1974b).



*Figure 8* The village during the filming of “*Nunta de Piatră*” (*The Stone Wedding*), 1971. Photo from the personal archive of Sorin Jurca (2017). Villagers fondly remember participating in the movie (Asociația Roșia Montană în Patrimoniul Mondial, 2024). Most of the buildings seen here are now either in a precarious condition or have been demolished.

<sup>12</sup> Nicolae Ceaușescu was the second and last communist leader of Romania (1965-1989) and considered a dictator. He was a promoter of heavy industrialization and urbanization, his policies aiming to almost entirely remove the countryside in its traditional sense through “rural systematization” (Stoian Connor, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> As explained by Iordachi & Dobrinu (2009) collectivization in Romania between the 1940s-1960s and aimed to transform agriculture into a more state-controlled and industrialized sector, aligning with communist ideals of communal ownership and production ideals. Peasants and farmers were compelled to surrender their land, livestock, and equipment to the collective farms, which were managed by the state or collective entities. This often-involved significant coercion, propaganda, and sometimes violence.

#### 4.1.2 The Start of Industrial Mining: A change in Scenery

The communist period also showed a quick transition from artisanal mining techniques to industrial-scale gold mining once the technology became available, eventually resulting in the opening of Cetate Quarry in the 1970s and disrupting traditional forms of community and labour (Asociația Roșia Montană în Patrimoniul Mondial, 2024, Section The Starting Point; Rus, 2021). The shift from locally owned and operated mines to state-run enterprises not only undermined the value of artisanal producers but also diminished the transmission of specialized knowledge and skills within the community (Barna, 2023). This historical backdrop is crucial to understanding the community's contemporary struggles and the drive towards reclaiming local agency, because the process of losing their identity as a traditional mining community started long before the arrival of RMGC, argument supported by Bălici's (2013) study on cultural heritage.



Figure 9 Cetate Quarry in April 2024 (personal archive).

In terms of collective imagination and environmentalism, one event caused by the communist regime that deeply affected villagers in the Apuseni mountains is the destruction of Valea Șesei, nearby Roșia Montană. This disaster resulted from the reckless management of the copper mine at Roșia Poieni (Melenti & Magyar, 2011; SystExt, n.d.). In the mining sector there was very little regard given to the degree of the environmental damage involved (Olteanu, 2019). The mine has been exploiting copper ore deposits since the 1980s, making it the second largest copper mine in Europe, exploitation still active nowadays (Milu et al., 2002; SystExt, n.d.).



*Figure 10 The remnants of Geamăna village, photographed by Gheorghe Popa for National Geographic (Wogan, 2021). Only the roof of the church is still visible.*

Since the beginning, the quarry has contributed to significant ecological degradation, particularly through the dumping of mining waste into the surrounding valleys (Milu et al., 2002). This practice has had devastating effects on local communities, most notably in the Şesii Valley (Valea Şesii), which has become a vast settling basin for mine tailings (Levei et al., 2011). The initial construction of a settling pond near the village of Curmătură resulted in the

eviction of more than 300 families, while the subsequent discharge of tailings towards the village of Geamăna engulfed the village and laid waste to its environment (Botezan et al., 2020; Melenti & Magyar, 2011).

In 1986, the transformation of the village of Geamăna into a toxic, expanding basin covering over 130 hectares reflects the long-term impact of mining waste, which not only destroyed the village but also compromised the health and safety of the remaining residents (Milu et al., 2002) This has affected over 1000 families and destroying the environment irreversibly (Levei et al., 2011; Melenti & Magyar, 2011). As it later turned out, this event played a significant role in the formation of a regional imaginary which associated industrial mining with environmental degradation, displacement and socio-economic instability, triggering a deep-seated scepticism towards large-scale mining operations (Sevastre, 2017).

#### 4.1.3 The Shift to Capitalism in the 90's and RMGC's Arrival

During the post-communist transition, Roşia Montană, like many other regions, faced economic instability and uncertainty, despite the Cetate Quarry continuing to be exploited (Rus, 2021). Before, life in the village used to be vibrant and lively. However, with the decline of the mining industry in the 90s, the luxuries quickly becoming a thing of the past. The arrival of Gabriel Resources in the late 1990s promised new economic opportunities through the development of Europe's largest open-pit gold mine (Leonte, 2018). Some saw the project as

a necessary step for economic survival and revival, while others viewed it as a destructive force that would irreparably damage the village's historical and natural landscape.



Figure 11 The logo of RMGC. The golden band is sometimes presented on its own on buildings bought by the company in Roşia Montană

This capitalist venture, however, introduced new power dynamics and socio-economic challenges as their focus on profit and efficiency starkly conflicted with the community's need for equitable development (Alexander et al., 2018; Alexandrescu, 2020; Leonte, 2018). RMGC made use of aggressive buyout strategies and the promise of economic revitalization through large-scale mining operations – project which would operate at most for 20 years (Alexandrescu, 2011; Quartz Film, 2004; RMGC, 2015). However, these promises were met with scepticism and resistance from locals who had witnessed the environmental degradation caused by past mining activities at Roşia Poieni (Despa, 2021).

In hindsight, the Geamăna disaster became a pivotal point for the socio-economic developments of the larger area, heavily influencing Roşia Montană's mining activities and people's perceptions of risk when it comes to industrial mining (Sevastre, 2017). Multiple interviewees recognized that having such a visual example of the magnitude of mining's disasters in such proximity was a key motivator for their activism or opposition to the project. In the case of the RMGC project, the village of Corna would have had a similar fate to Geamăna, as the tailings would have swallowed the valley entirely (Pascaru, 2013). Several activists from Roşia Montană, having worked at the Roşia Poieni mine, were acutely aware of the environmental and social threats posed by Gabriel Resources' plans and recognized the severity of the potential impact. According to them, Gabriel Resources repeatedly demonstrated a lack of proper understanding of the surrounding landscapes and poor management in implementation, amplifying concerns over what would happen if the project went through.

*“Publicly and on paper they seemed to be in control of things. They did their best to present themselves as good as possible in front of their investors. However, the reality on the ground was entirely different, all they managed to do was to show time and again how incompetent they actually were. You've seen that side road, on the way to Gura Roşiei<sup>14</sup>? It goes to nowhere and it stops abruptly. Why? Because Gabriel did not*

<sup>14</sup> One of the other villages in the commune.



*think of surveying the land first, they just built the road – but the rocks there were soft and crumbly, so it would have been impossible for anything to last there. They found out the hard way, so they had to stop constructions. The worst part is that the road destabilised the soil and the water flows... in a few months, all the houses down from there got flooded and their foundations were compromised. A similar thing happened in Recea – they built that neighbourhood on a swamp. The cellars got flooded within a few years, there was a reason why nobody else had built anything there until then.”* (Interviewee #13, personal communication, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024).

The allure of potential economic benefits was overshadowed by fears of environmental destruction and the loss of cultural heritage, leading to widespread protests and the eventual halt of the mining project (Leonte, 2018; B. N. Mucea & Marina, 2022; B.-N. Mucea, 2022). The community’s initial response to the RMGC project was of clear-cut rejection, with most inhabitants refusing to sell their properties in the early stages of the project (Velicu, 2012). This resulted in the formation of the *Alburnus Maior*, an opposition group to RMGC’s plans, which consisted at first of approximately 350 families and subsistence farmers (Kocsis, 2004; Roth & Maier, 2016). Following Roth & Maier (2016), as well as my fieldwork findings, the main arguments invoked by villagers regarding their activism can generally be clustered into three themes: environmental and health concerns, loss of economic tradition and heritage (e.g. small-scale farming, artisanal mining and various forms of craftsmanship) and worries regarding the likely displacement and fragmentation of the community. Residents were particularly concerned about any potential environmental degradation that would result from the use of cyanide, which would have posed severe risks to regional water sources and ecosystems, in line with the findings of Levei et al. (2011).

The cessation of industrial mining activities in Roşia Montană in 2006, marked a significant shift for the community (Leonte, 2018; S. D. Roth, personal communication, May 3, 2024, personal communication, June 29, 2024; Roth & Maier, 2016). This decision was linked to Romania’s accession to the EU in 2007, as the country had to align its mining laws to those of the Union (Dani et al., 2006). However, the World Bank had stipulated that economically non-viable mines must be privatized and recultivated in order to help communities transition to alternative economic activities (The World Bank, 2007). These two contradictory directives led to the mine’s formal closure, but also to the transfer of the mining license from MinVest Deva to RMGC (Government of Romania - Department for

Infrastructure Projects and Foreign Investment, 2013). As we are now almost two decades later from the closure of Cetate Quarry, and RMGC's project never commenced, it is sensible to note that the mining area was, in fact, abandoned (Ștefănescu & Alexandrescu, 2020). Thus, the end of all mining operations led to a spike in economic instability and uncertainty (Botezan et al., 2020). Consequently, while the official records marked a closure, RMGC had promised the villagers the foreseeable reopening of the mining sector (Alexander et al., 2018). Moreover, the only de-facto closure plans published by Gabriel Resources/RMGC have only been in the context of their own project (Merciu et al., 2012), scenario which did not play out as such. As time passed and neither the mining nor the recultivation of the site happened, the local imaginary became dominated by uncertainty and fear (S. D. Roth, personal communication, May 3, 2024, personal communication, June 29, 2024).

This period also overlapped with some of the final stages of the resettlement and relocation plans of RMGC, and the population had already been subjected to a strong pro-mining campaign characterized by intimidation, misinformation and a false sense of free choice (Stanculescu, 2012; Velicu, 2012, 2019; Vesalon & Crețan, 2012). RMGC's land acquisition tactics, psychological manipulation, and divisive strategies led to deep social fragmentation (Goțiu, 2024a; Leonte, 2018; Vesalon & Crețan, 2012). The campaign exploited existing unemployment and poverty, making the pro-mining narrative appealing to some residents despite potential long-term risks (Vesalon & Crețan, 2012). Thus, the community became polarized between those who supported the mining project, hoping for economic revival, and those who opposed it, fearing environmental degradation and loss of cultural heritage (Alexandrescu, 2020; Leonte, 2018; Vesalon & Crețan, 2012).

#### 4.1.4 Institutions, Infrastructure and Misinformation

In 2002, the Company managed to change the PUG<sup>15</sup> (Asociația Alburnus Maior, 2012), effectively changing the area from a diverse economic landscape to a monoindustrial zone (Velicu, 2019). In practice, this meant that only mining could happen there, leaving the area impaired and leading to the displacement of residents and public infrastructure. Although these plans were initially approved by the local council, they were later annulled in 2012 by the Alba-

---

<sup>15</sup> The PUG (Plan Urbanistic General, en. *General Urban Planning*) is a comprehensive urban planning document required by Romanian law that outlines the development and organization of a locality within its administrative territory, including regulations for land use, zoning, and infrastructure for both urban and rural areas; it is needed for the next steps of zooming in to the PUZ (Plan Urbanistic Zonal, en. *Zonal Urban Planning*) and the PUD (Plan Urbanistic de Detaliu, en. *Detail Urban Planning*). For more details, see statute: Normele metodologice de aplicare a Legii nr. 350/2001 privind amenajarea teritoriului și urbanismul și de elaborare și actualizare a documentațiilor de urbanism din 26.02.2016 (2016).

Iulia Court of Appeal due to illegalities in the approval process, including conflicts of interest and lack of proper consultation with the affected population (Asociația Alburnus Maior, 2012). Since then, Roșia Montană lacks a PUG, leaving any type development in a legal vacuum, meaning very little to no public spending for future development planning (Goțiu, 2024b). The implications are deeply felt by the community nowadays, for example by not being able to (re)build infrastructure without very high personal financial investments, which would otherwise not be needed with a PUG in place (Goțiu, 2024a). Next to this, getting a business permit is a very laborious bureaucratic process, because there is no development plan in place based on which it can be decided whether the firm fits with the local vision or not (Redacția Alba24.ro, 2022). Moreover, due to the changes done back in 2002, many businesses (e.g. the bakery, the pharmacy, the cinema, the doctor’s office, the dentist etc.) had closed down, and public services (garbage collection, water treatment, road maintenance) slowed down significantly. This essentially left the local population with shabby and outdated infrastructure to rely on for meeting their basic needs, which is still the case nowadays.

The situation of the PUG is also related to an overall distrust in institutions. During its dominance, RMGC had seized control of a significant percentage of Romanian media for a long time (Alexandrescu, 2020, p. 84; Mutler, 2024) – with only few newspapers and magazines such as *Formula As* publishing about the opposition movement (Alexandrescu, 2020, p. 111; Pop, 2013), most information being mainly disseminated on social media (Matiuța, 2023; Velicu, 2015). Because of that, they experienced themselves a sense of alienation between what was going on “on the field” and what was being said regarding the village in higher up politics – process which is in line with other experience-distancing processes explained by Alexandrescu (2020) in the case of Roșia Montană.



Figure 12 One edition of RMGC’s free newspaper. Former prime minister Victor Ponta is portrayed in the upper picture. Main title: “Roșia Montană, a community which lived from mining”, followed by news on local events (from the personal archive of Sorin Jurca).

Interviewees mentioned that RMGC’s local newspaper had a massive influence on people’s interpretation of the events, as it made it seem like the Company had full support from

the state, by portraying highly influential politicians such as Victor Ponta<sup>16</sup> and regularly. This newspaper was also the only free local source of information, effectively monopolizing the dissemination and framing of local news. An example of RMGC’s newspaper, published weekly every Friday, is shown in *Figure 13*. The newspaper was not, however, the only dramaturgical intervention (Hajer & Pelzer, 2018; Oomen et al., 2022) which RMGC employed to seize control of people’s imagination in relation to what capitalism could offer for them:

*“They came here with big bags of money, each filled with low-value banknotes, so it looks like a huge volume, to intimidate us by how rich they are. Of course, many people were impressed and got tricked by the taste of financial wealth. Later, they came here in a helicopter and threw money out ‘for free’ for us to catch, to show us that they are above us in all ways imaginable. They tried to buy us off, but all it did was make us distrust them even more.”* (Interviewee #8, personal communication, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024).

To combat disinformation within the area, the movement *Save Roșia Montană* created its own newspaper, coordinated by the publisher *Ziua de Cluj*. This publication aimed to share accurate information and was most frequently distributed during significant events, such as the *FânFest* every August. Predominantly managed by an editorial team in Cluj-Napoca, the articles were well-crafted, offering a counter-narrative to RMGC’s influence. It was only shared within *Roșia Montană* and usually published twice a year. This alternative newspaper was more than just a source of information; it symbolized a grassroots effort to reclaim the narrative and provide the local community with a voice. One



*Figure 13* The August 2006 edition of the *Salvați Roșia Montană* newspaper, coordinated by *Ziua de Cluj*. Bottom text translation: “Do not let *Roșia Montană* die! People are more important than gold!”

<sup>16</sup> Former Prime Minister of Romania, Victor Ponta, is infamous in the case of *Roșia Montană* due to his contradictory stance on the mining project. Initially, he opposed the project and criticized it, aligning himself with environmentalists and activists. However, once he became Prime Minister, Ponta shifted his position and supported the project, advocating for its approval. He pushed for controversial laws changes which would allow RMGC to start exploitations, leading to significant public outrage and protests against both Ponta and the project (Pelehatăi & Dulămiță, 2018; Soare & Tufiș, 2021; Velicu, 2019).



edition of the newspaper can be seen in *Figure 13*.

What is clear is that the roșieni have had both limited sources of unbiased information and have been represented biasedly in national discourses, leading to disinterest in media nowadays when it comes to matters on Roșia Montană. This, in fact, led to a passive acknowledgement of the ICSID decision of May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024, among most of the people. During my fieldwork it also became apparent that many residents did not fully grasp what the implications of the ICSID case were at local level, besides a selected few. Furthermore, as of June 2024, RMGC has not received a renewal for the mining license (Agenția Națională pentru Resurse Minerale, 2024), meaning that there is a possibility that the long-delayed closure plan might finally be implemented – however, at the time of writing, it is still uncertain how that would look like and how the local government would support that (S. D. Roth, personal communication, June 29, 2024).

The topic of how the city hall is currently functioning came up on a daily basis during Mr. Darie's campaign preparations. As mentioned earlier in the thesis, my fieldwork happened to take place during the elections for the local government. Discussions revealed a rather sombre dynamic: RMGC's influence continues being influential in local politics, dictating the course and pace of development. In practical terms, that means that very little is being done to improve the living conditions in the village, as the current mayor, Mr. Furdui, continues being a proponent of the mining project (Rîșteiu et al., 2022). Interviewees expressed their displeasure regarding how local politicians act with disinterest towards infrastructure for clean water, garbage collection, roads, and also tourism. They explained how they had to make their own tourist signs and information boards to promote the UNESCO site, since the city hall refused to invest in that. Hence, Mr. Darie leveraged on the topic of tourism during the campaign and decided to put together his vision in the form of a newspaper, and one paragraph summarized the institutional dynamics as follows:

*“With each passing year, we face the same bitter reality: the mayors who have led the destinies of Roșia Montana since the events of 1989 up until now have done nothing but contribute to our decline. With only three mayors in the last 25 years - Narița Virgil for two terms, Botar David for one term, and Furdui Eugen for four terms - Roșia*

*Montană has remained a prisoner of [state] indifference and corporate interests.”*  
(Cornea, 2024)<sup>17</sup>.

**Info Box 5: *Almost a decade at ICSID***

Parallel to local power struggles, in 2015 Gabriel Resources initiated arbitration against the Romanian government at the World Bank’s International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID), seeking damages amounting to billions of dollars due to the inability to proceed with the mining project (Burlă, 2021; Dumitrescu, 2023; Mosoianu, 2023; Otopeanu, 2024). Concurrently, in response to appeals from civil society and technocratic politicians, Roșia Montană was designated as a World Heritage Site in 2021, resulting in additional legislation aimed at preserving the site and fostering economic development (Institutul Național al Patrimoniului, 2016; Ministerul Culturii, 2017; Mosoianu, 2023; UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2018). This development played a significant role in the settlement of the ICSID lawsuit – on the night of March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024, the World Bank announced that Gabriel Resources had lost the arbitration process, therefore ending the almost three-decade long social and environmental dispute (Center for International Environmental Law, 2024; Dumitru, 2024; Lewis, 2024). This recent opens up an alternative development pathway which many locals from Roșia Montană are interested in pursuing, as it brings together hope for the future of the commune and the wider region (Goțiu, 2024; Țimonea, 2024). However, it seems like Gabriel Resources is contesting the ICSID arbitration, prolonging uncertainty and controversy regarding the future of the village (Ernst, 2024).

---

<sup>17</sup> Translated from Romanian to English by me for this thesis. I had been invited to contribute to the newspaper by transcribing testimonials and editing some of the articles, including this one.

## 4.2 Social Cohesion and Collective Imagination Nowadays

*“You can be good friends with anyone here... as long as you do not mention anything related to mining.”* (Interviewee #2, personal communication, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024).

The following subsections focus on understanding the dimensions of social cohesion as summarized back in *Table 1* in the theoretical framework. Each section represents a different dimension and contains examples and quotes gathered on fieldwork.

### 4.2.1 Attachment and Belonging

A first dimension of social cohesion is related to how people feel connected to their community, environment, and heritage. The roșieni’s relationship with the gold underground is an extraordinarily complex and intimate one. The trades of gold are not just things they do outside their homes but are also a significant part of their home life – visible even in the architecture of the houses (Bâlici, 2013). Their memories and stories have always revolved around the gold beneath them. In that sense, Roșia Montană is characterized by a complex tapestry of attachment and belonging, woven through the experiences and perspectives of three distinct generations: the elderly, the adults, and the youth. Each generation’s sense of connection is shaped by the unique historical, social, and economic factors associated with the place, as explained in section 4.1. Exploring these perspectives shows a nuanced understanding of collective identity, reflecting how the community navigated – and continues to navigate – its challenges and opportunities.

#### *The Elderly*

This generation, comprising of individuals aged 60 and above, holds vivid memories of the village’s prosperous past, including the times before industrial mining had started at Cetate Quarry and Roșia Poieni. For them, Roșia Montană is associated with economic abundance, strong social ties, and a cohesive community life centred – but not limited to – artisanal mining activities. Their attachment is strongly tied to these memories, fostering a deep sense of pride and connection to the natural environment, their farming practices, and the rich folklore of the area.

Now heading towards retirement, if not already retirees, this generation was in their youth when the RMGC conflict had initially started almost 30 years ago. Those who remained in the village ended up dedicating most of their life to the opposition, and have seen their hometown decay over the years, both physically and socially. Most often, their strength and

resilience are motivated by the desire for their children to also could live in a thriving Roşia Montană, just like in the past. Thus, the fond memories which they share from their childhood and young adulthood come alongside a pervasive sense of nostalgia:

*“I happened to be born here in Roşia Montană, as a miner’s son. My family lived in the beautiful former neighbourhood of Berk, which in my childhood years was known as “Little Dallas”. My relatives happened to settle in this place, forming a large and united family. The child in me, always fascinated by Roşia, explored every corner of its beauties and offerings. How could I not remember the beautifully maintained and lively houses the traditions, and the characteristic feasts held by the community?” (Jurca, 2024).*

The transition from a bustling mining hub to a community struggling with economic stagnation has deeply affected the collective psyche of the elderly generation, as many were left unemployed and struggling to make ends meet. Unfortunately, RMGC exploited this vulnerability in their pro-mining campaigns, recruiting individuals to speak in favour of the project in exchange for small sums of money which would provide enough firewood to get them through the winters (Interviewees #3 and #9, personal communications, April 2024).

This generation is also one that grew up in close connection with the local nature and its fertile land. Many grew up alongside their parents, tending to animals and cultivating the land, instilling a sense of freedom and life that is inseparable from their relationship with the land. In a group discussion with multiple elderly people, a moment of appreciation was especially given to wildflowers. As others nodded, the moment captured the intrinsic value placed on the wild, untamed aspects of nature:



*Figure 14 Elderly woman sowing plants in her vegetable garden (personal archive, April 2024)*

*“Unlike garden flowers, wildflowers are sown by God. And there is nothing more beautiful to gift to a loved one than something from the Divine itself.”* (Interviewee #19, personal communication, May 7th, 2024).

However, ecological knowledge is being eroded as modern lifestyles become prominent among younger generations, which is especially noticeable with regards to the use of medicinal plants from the forest. Individuals struggle more and more with proper plant identification, and as observed by one registered nurse, this leads to potentially life-threatening situations due to toxicity (Interviewee #17, personal communication, May 21st, 2024).

### *The Adults*

The adult generation in Roșia Montană, typically encompassing individuals in their 30s up to their late 50s, represents a pivotal force in the village’s recent history. This generation, which was in their youth or early adulthood when the RMGC conflict began nearly 30 years ago, was at the forefront of the movement against the large-scale mining project proposed by Gabriel Resources. Their experiences during this period are marked by intense social mobilization and activism, which significantly shaped their collective identity and sense of purpose.



Figure 15 Protest in Roșia Montană. Photo posted on Facebook by Leona Gem (2013). Center banner: “Treason against the country is measured in gold”.

The protests were characterized by their energy, solidarity, and large-scale participation. This generation recalls the mass gatherings, passionate speeches, and a robust sense of community that emerged as they collectively fought to protect their heritage and environment. The protests were not merely acts of defiance but were also imbued with a deep sense of stewardship for their land and heritage,

underscoring their role as protectors of the region. For them, attachment and belonging are deeply related to these events. One resident poignantly remarked:

*“We stood together, shoulder to shoulder, not just to save our land, but to preserve our way of life.”* (Interviewee #5, personal communication, May 10th, 2024).



This generation's activism was fuelled by their direct experiences with the aggressive tactics of RMGC, which included psychological manipulation and misleading economic promises. The legacy of the protests continues to influence the adult generation's worldview and community dynamics. In that sense, they have demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability. Many remain active in local initiatives aimed at sustainable development and cultural preservation (Leonte, 2018). However, the scars of the conflict are still visible, both in the physical landscape and in the social fabric of the community. Many wonder whether attachment is enough to remain in a place lacking even the most basic services – such as a pharmacy, a doctor's office or a dentist – and where institutional support is extremely limited.

There are also young adults, from other regions and even from abroad, who see Roșia as a place of hope. They are drawn to the village's potential, to its quiet surroundings, and to its history. These newcomers often share values aligned with sustainability and cultural preservation, thereby reinforcing the community's evolving collective imaginary. Some strive to work remotely instead of living in cramped cities, others want to open businesses or be involved in sustainable agriculture. However, only time can tell how these dreams and hopes will materialize in practice.



*Figure 16 A group of Romanian and foreign tourists being guided by Tică Darie in the center of Roșia Montană (personal archive, June 2024)*

### *The Youth*

The younger generation in Roșia Montană, those in their teens and twenties, have grown up in a village markedly different from the one their parents and grandparents knew. Unlike previous generations, who experienced the height of mining activities and the subsequent protests against RMGC, the youth have lived their entire lives as a post-mining community – a village like any other Romanian village – and not fully aware of the mining heritage at hand. Their perspectives are shaped by the ongoing efforts to rebrand and rebuild Roșia Montană through sustainable development and cultural preservation (Leonte, 2018). They have grown up with the festivals and cultural events that have become central to the village's new identity

(Asociația Roșia Montană în Patrimoniul Mondial, 2024; FânFest, n.d.). The youth are therefore more attuned to the possibilities of sustainable development and the need for economic diversification, not considering themselves a mining community at all. When discussing with parents, many of them resonated with the following idea:

*“They were not conscious witnesses to the years when the company was so powerful here and to that complete siege under which the village was. Thus, we see a sort of healing as time passes. The younger generations are completely different anyway due to their exposure to entirely different technological environments and information, for better or worse. It is not something we can even evaluate right now - what impact will they have on the development of Roșia Montană, because they are substantially and fundamentally different from how we were, due to these things they are exposed to?”*

(Interviewee #5, personal communication, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024).

For this generation, attachment is still in the making. There are several bottom-up initiatives organizing events for children and families in the village. One example is the yearly Children’s Day festival on June 1<sup>st</sup>, a collaboration between two local NGOs, *Asociația Roșia Montană în Patrimoniul Mondial*<sup>18</sup> and *Cercetașii din Roșia Montană*<sup>19</sup>



Figure 17 The Children’s Day Festival, organized by *Asociația Roșia Montană în Patrimoniul Mondial*, June 1st 2024 (personal archive).

(see Figure 17). Another activity is the weekly book club *CititOra*<sup>20</sup>, where children and teenagers meet up every weekend to share ideas and review whatever they’ve read recently, as well as reading together in a group setting (*CititOra*, n.d.). Thus, villagers aim to create a stimulating environment for their children, and many young people dearly remember their time part-taking in such projects even many years after moving away from their hometown.

<sup>18</sup> EN: Roșia Montană Cultural Heritage Association

<sup>19</sup> EN: Roșia Montană Scouting Center

<sup>20</sup> EN: The name is a word play conveying the ideas of “Reading Hour” and “Reader”

#### 4.2.2 Social Relations

One could argue that gold has both brought the community of Roșia Montană together, as well as tearing it apart. The elderly recall times when each member of their family had a distinct, yet very important role within the community:

*“Men used to work in the mine, of course, and do other heavy trades. Women had their own roles, but in the sense of helping each other – one would sew, another would crochet, and another one would make delicious food. Each of them would assume one of these roles organically, nobody was forced to participate – funnily enough this is still visible nowadays among the elderly women and how they share responsibilities within the community. The children, in the meantime, would spend time with the women and learn about the herbs, the medicinal plants, the softness of life.”* (Interviewee #3, personal communication, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024).

However, the roșieni faced significant personal and familial challenges once RMGC joined the picture. Some had to balance their roles as activists with their responsibilities as parents and caregivers and endured violent threats from RMGC’s supporters over the years, leaving deep psychological scars. Others were stuck in a vulnerable position of being financially dependent on RMGC, seeing it as the only way of getting out of poverty. Either way, people were motivated in a certain direction by a desire to secure a better future for the younger generations, showcasing their resilience. Their own childhoods, filled with clear memories of the community being torn apart by mining, contrasted sharply with the future shaped by RMGC which was quickly unfolding in front of them and their offsprings.

People then had mixed reactions to the events unfolding around them, essentially splitting the population in two diametrically opposing camps: those who supported the mining project, hoping for economic revival, and those staunchly opposing it, fearful of the worst-case scenario of being relocated by force and losing their identity. Families often got split between pro-mining and anti-mining stances, leading to internal conflicts and strained relationships between parents, children, siblings and so on (Corporate Europe Observatory, 2019). The psychological burden of navigating these situations has been significant, with individuals often feeling torn between economic necessity and ethical convictions when making decisions related to their village. This has led to long-lasting tension and conflict within the community,



with those who vehemently supporting RMGC eventually leaving the village altogether by accepting to be relocated to other areas (Stanculescu, 2012).

One specific concern associated with mining, invoked by many members of the community, was the danger of developing silicosis, a lung disease caused by the inhalation of silica dust, which is prevalent in mining activities. Silicosis poses a significant risk to miners and residents living near mining sites, leading to severe respiratory issues and reducing life expectancy (Foster, 1985; Girdler-Brown et al., 2008). The potential increase in silicosis cases added to the community's resistance, as more than 30% of the men who had previously worked in (underground) mining had already been exposed to silica dust and suffered from the disease (Hațegan, 2017). Widows, already burdened by grief, found themselves embroiled in legal battles with their children, further fracturing familial relationships. One story, told by one of the interviewees, stuck to me:

*“In the early 2000s we had a significant wave of men passing away due to silicosis. The entire village was mourning, we buried dozens of men around that time. When Gold realized that was happening, they took advantage of the situation. They encouraged young people who were pro-mining to sue their widowed mothers and ask for the inheritance to be split between the children. And so, every day you would see mourning women dressed in black waiting for their children in court in Câmpeni. I think most of them never spoke to each other ever again afterwards, as some sold the land and houses to RMGC, and others did not.”* (Interviewee #12, personal communication, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024).

By moving a significant percentage of the community to Recea, RMGC effectively dismantled existing social networks and disrupted the tight-knit relationships that had been formed over generations (Buzoianu & Țoc, 2013). Those who remained in Roșia Montană were deeply affected by this social transition, as they suddenly found themselves in an abandoned village.



*Figure 18 The neighbourhood of Recea in Alba Iulia as presented by the developer (CasaLuc, n.d.). Very clearly a different type of landscape compared to Roșia Montană.*

Many confessed that they felt uneasy about having no neighbours anymore, that the area became scary to walk around at night. It all deeply affected informal risk-sharing mechanisms (how people mitigate risk through their social circles) as their network structure got dismantled, a phenomenon which often happens in cases of displacement and resettlement (Lam & Paul, 2013).

Interestingly, a few interviewees recalled recent interactions with friends and relatives who had relocated to Recea, noting a stark decline in the sense of community post-relocation. RMGC's operations, which included constructing a new neighborhood in Alba for Roșia Montană residents, seem to have inadvertently dissolved communal bonds. Despite residents being familiar with one another, the social fabric appears fragmented, precisely because of the process of resettlement and relocation, described by (Stanculescu, 2012).

*“You know that Gold built a neighbourhood in Alba, there are only people from Roșia there. I mean, there wasn't a person who didn't know each other, everyone is from here. I attended a baptism in Alba and when we came out of the church, everyone just rushed out, not even a ‘hello, how are you?’, nothing. I was shocked. It is truly cold<sup>21</sup> in Recea.”* (Interviewee #2, personal communication, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024).

#### 4.2.3 Spirituality

In terms of spirituality, Roșia Montană's imaginary is a fascinating mix of mythology, religion, a connection to the surrounding resources, and a transgenerational duty towards the family line. While stories such as those of giants or the *vâlve* – fairies who are believed to watch over and distribute the golden treasures of the underground – are still very much present in the area (Sevastre, 2017, p. 24), modern life has diminished their importance among the younger generations. These stories, which previously used to be interpreted as omens, are now mostly regarded as children's fairy tales. However, from (Sevastre, 2017) we also see how the Company itself had been, just as the landscape itself, mysticised: the fight between the villagers and RMGC is often compared to the biblical story of David and Goliath (p. 28).

---

<sup>21</sup> Original: “Chiar e rece la Recea” – the phrase plays on the meaning of the Romanian word *rece*, which means *cold* in English, to which the name of the neighbourhood sounds like. Thus, the phrase has a humorous twist because it can also be understood as “It's really cold at The Cold One”.

Another crucial aspect of social cohesion in Roșia Montană is thus religion. Despite the presence of different Christian denominations, these differences do not seem to create major conflicts, unlike in other areas of Romania where some conflicts between religious groups are present (Boțan et al., 2015). Generally, there is a profound appreciation for the spiritual and religious aspects of life, even among those who do not actively practice their faith.



Figure 19 The Churches in Roșia Montană. Sketches created by ARA and displayed at the Unitarian Parish House (photo: personal archive)

As one resident explained:

*“My parents, my grandparents, and great-grandparents are buried here. How could I ever let them destroy the land, the cemeteries, when those who gave me life are buried there?”* (Interviewee #20, personal communication, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024).

However, RMGC’s operations not only divided families but also deepened the psychological trauma of losing loved ones in a religious sense. Even among those who remained in the village, shocking stories still occurred due to the overall changes at local level in terms of interactions with institutions, which further exacerbated intergenerational pain:

*“The land of the Church was sold to RMGC, but not the building itself. We could continue going to the Service, but they announced us that they would unearth our dead... Soon after, they mailed to me, in two garbage bags, my grandpa and grandma.”* (Interviewee #14, personal communication, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024).

The land is not only a place of living but also a sacred space that holds the remains of their ancestors, serving as a physical manifestation of their heritage and lineage. Some even go as far as saying:

*“It is not us who saved Roșia Montană, it was God who did it. If He had not wanted this, we would not be here today right now.”* (Interviewee #13, personal communication, May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024).

The Unitarian Church holds a special place in their hearts as its decision to remain independent from corporate interests has earned it immense respect and affection within the community. For many elderly residents, this church symbolizes resilience and moral integrity, standing as a steadfast guardian of their spiritual and cultural heritage. The Church is currently being restored, and the Unitarian Parish House has become the community centre of the Adoptă o Casă programme, an initiative coordinated by the NGO *Architecture. Restoration. Archaeology (ARA)*, where every summer they organize restoration camps and workshops (Adoptă o Casă la Roșia Montană NGO, n.d.). At the same time, the mystical and the religious also intertwine in more serious matters, for some being an integral part of their activism:

*“We asked a famous priest to come to Roșia Montană to help us pray save our homes. We walked together, for 7 days and 7 nights, to every corner of the village, in the Quarry, in the forests and along the rivers. At some point, the priest got dizzy and said ‘There is a deep, deep curse on the gold here. Do not fret, those who seek for it will be punished. Roșia Montană will never cease to exist, God will always keep you safe.’. Since then, I have been convinced that it is indeed so the case. Three days before the decision from Washington came, it thundered three times, no rain whatsoever. I think that was God saying everything will be alright.”* (Interviewee #13, personal communication, May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024).

#### 4.2.4 Shared Values

In Roșia Montană, shared values are deeply rooted in the community’s historical connection to the land, family traditions, and a commitment to education. These shared values are evident in the way the community approaches ecology, farming and pastoral life, where the natural environment is not just a resource but an integral part of their identity and cultural heritage (Velicu, 2012; Velicu & OGREZEANU, 2022). The local population’s relationship with the land reflects a profound respect for ecological sustainability, informed by generations of traditional knowledge and practices (Sevastre, 2017, pp. 63–68). As one interviewee said to me:

*“The land speaks to us; it nurtures us and feeds us. Without land, we are as good as dead. How can you sustain yourself without the land?”* (Interviewee #14, personal communication, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024).

This perspective reflects a deep-seated belief in the land as a source of life and sustenance, as the land is not just a means of economic survival but a vital element of their identity and existence (Kocsis, 2004). Historically, most residents did not always have land, nor a stable financial situation (Olteanu, 2019). For those who did possess land, it was their everything – and a potential loss or the absence of land at all would be catastrophic, both physically and metaphorically. This aspect was a central argument for the villagers’ activism against RMGC, as many could not comprehend the possibility of a dissolution between their identity as humans and their land (Sevastre, 2017). The testimony below is in line with Vesalon & Crețan’s (2012) observation that RMGC did not intend to provide compensation for the loss of access to public land such as pastures, proving that the mining project was, from the start, incompatible with people’s collective identity:

*“Sure, they can give me a house in Recea<sup>22</sup>, but for me it means nothing. What am I to do without my cow and my pastures? I would become nothing.”* (Interviewee #14, personal communication, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024).

Binding man to land, the transmission of these values within families has been crucial in a community that has faced substantial external pressures and disruptions. They are passed down not only through daily routines but also via local traditions related to spirituality and religion. During religious festivals and communal gatherings, family units come together to celebrate and reinforce their shared identity, fostering a strong sense of unity and mutual support (Vizitați Roșia Montană, 2014). Another example the village’s rich folklore, from which parents draw inspiration for children’s stories, representing a way to pass on the intangible heritage may otherwise be forgotten (Interviewees #1, #3, #4, #7, #9, personal communications, April-May 2024). Stories of the *vâlve* – fairies who are believed to watch over and distribute the golden treasures of the underground (Sevastre, 2017, p. 24) – are still very much present in the present-day interactions.

---

<sup>22</sup> The neighbourhood built in Alba Iulia by RMGC for relocating villagers who would be affected by the project (Stanculescu, 2012).

Furthermore, there is a strong emphasis on providing a good future for children in terms of opportunities and education. For example, at one marathon event (Pachamama Association, n.d.) organized some years ago, as told by an interviewee, a poignant scene unfolded when a family was seen crying together. Their child wanted to participate in the race together with his classmates, but the parents faced a dire dilemma as they worked for RMGC: if they were caught interacting with “the Opposition”, they risked losing all financial support. However, the mother reached a breaking point and declared: *“Enough, I can’t let them decide how I raise and educate my children.”* Her words echoed as a powerful testament to her exhaustion with the company’s relentless pressure, still remembered by other villagers nowadays.

#### 4.2.5 (In)Equality

Most people, when thinking of Roșia Montană, associate it with the pro-mining and the anti-mining division among community members. However, during my fieldwork it became obvious that there was, in fact, a third group: the undecided, who did not necessarily support mining but neither opposed it, thus sticking around to see what happens with RMGC but always ready to relocate if needed – this population still living in Roșia Montană nowadays. There is, nevertheless, one essential characteristic of this group: they are economically and socially vulnerable: many have been associated or have worked for RMGC or TBL<sup>23</sup> out of need of employment, despite not necessarily agreeing with mining being the only development path possible in Roșia Montană. Some still live in houses owned by RMGC and are afraid that the Company’s fall would be synonymous with their own personal fall, as they do not foresee any alternative means of employment in the future.

*“They [RMGC] found all our vulnerabilities, especially among those of us who were poor, and used every chance to trigger them.”* (Interviewee #3, personal communication, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024)

Economic necessity forced some to align with RMGC, or later work for TBL, despite personal reservations about the environmental and social impacts. The promise of steady income and financial stability was a powerful motivator, particularly in a community that has faced prolonged economic hardship – and the company made sure to instrumentalize the most vulnerable members of the community for their own interests. As one resident explained:

---

<sup>23</sup> S.C. Total Business Land SRL, a subsidiary firm predominantly owned by Gabriel Resources (Gabriel Resources, 2023, p. 31). They have filed for insolvency on April 18th, 2024, just a few weeks after it was announced that Gabriel Resources has lost the ICSID case (Goțiu, 2024b).



*“I don’t want to support them, but what choice do I have? Without their money, how will I feed my family?”* (Interviewee #3, personal communication, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024).

Inequality has visibly increased due to RMGC’s presence in the village. The Company’s pervasive control led to many essential services to disappear over time but offered to provide alternatives instead – but only if you worked for them or had already sold your house. Thus, RMGC’s presence had become deeply entrenched in the daily lives of villagers, leaving them with few alternatives to get by. One resident recalled a particularly



*Figure 20 Abandoned house in Roșia Montană (personal archive, May 2024)*

telling moment that highlighted the extent of RMGC’s influence and the psychological and economic grip they held over the community:

*“She was extremely sick; we had no doctor in the village. I called Gold to ask for a car to take my daughter to the hospital... I don’t even know why I didn’t call the ambulance. I completely forgot that was even an option. They had us so ensnared, they mocked us so much, and yet I felt like they were the only ones who could help. It’s weird when I think about it.”* (Interviewee #15, personal communication, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024).

Moreover, RMGC had been the main employer in the area after the closure of Cetate Quarry, offering jobs to hundreds of people in the areas of Roșia Montană and Abrud (B.-N. Mucea, 2022). As evidenced by both empirical data and interviews, the number of employees varied greatly over the years. In 2013, the company had nearly 500 employees, but this number declined sharply in the following years, leaving only a dozen people by 2022 (B.-N. Mucea, 2022, p. 6). They were not “miners” though, as some were employed to do simple tasks such as sweeping floors or gardening – after all, no mining actually even happened. Sadly, these people, already in a vulnerable socio-economic position, were intentionally pushed by the Company to intimidate the opposition, fostering hate and division within the village. Due to RMGC’s influence among local authorities, this remained the order of things for many years, creating a vicious cycle of support for the Company, still visible nowadays.

Currently, many villagers still live in poverty and lack job opportunities (Adoptă o Casă la Roșia Montană NGO, 2021; Parasca & Butnaru, 2014), which was also visible during my fieldwork. The very recent dissolution of TBL (Țimonea, 2024) has left another couple hundred people unemployed. This is particularly problematic, as people generally agreed that the cost of living is rather high – detail which they mentioned on their own without my intervention. Alike other Romanians – for more context see Voivozeanu (2020) – many roșieni also resort to seasonal work abroad in order to make ends meet, especially the men. I believe this especially highlights the problem at hand, namely the lack of a de-facto closure of the mine, which would have included a professional requalification and alternative employment opportunities for the different groups in the village (which would indeed have had most impact on men).

Despite the challenging circumstances faced by the village over the years, various post-extractive economic activities have emerged, driven by bottom-up initiatives (Leonte, 2018). This represents a significant shift in the community's trajectory, potentially influencing social cohesion in profound ways. These initiatives, with a particular emphasis on eco-tourism and cultural events, signify a departure from the extractive paradigm towards a more sustainable and community-driven development (Botezan et al., 2020). Local entrepreneurs are now venturing into community-based businesses such as crafting handmade clothing, traditional artisanal crafts, establishing eco-friendly accommodations, and creating festivals (Despa, 2021; FânFest, n.d.; Goțiu, 2024a; Made in Rosia Montana, n.d.-b; Turism în Roșia Montană, n.d.). Offering practical and tangible examples of alternative ways of living, this has somewhat healed the community hand guided people to slowly depart from the mono-industrial mindset (Goțiu, 2024a). For women, *Made in Roșia Montană* is now the main employer, employing more than 60 ladies who work from home or in the sewing shop, creating merino garments (Made in Rosia Montana, n.d.-a). This seemed to be an important factor, as women generally seemed more optimistic and hopeful for a good future in Roșia Montană compared to the men, highlighting the importance of economic revitalization in the area.

#### 4.2.6 Subjective/Objective Quality of Life

Life in Roșia Montană has objectively become harder once RMGC entered the sphere of the village back in the late 1900's, and especially after the change of the PUG in 2002, as almost all essential services have been discontinued or left in ruins: from energy (woodfire distribution), transportation infrastructure, water treatment and distribution, garbage collection, and healthcare, to education, shops, and even street signs. This became evident already from



the first couple of interviews and interactions with locals, as their speech patterns revealed a mix of disappointment, anger, as well as despondence: *“We used to have a doctor’s office...”* or *“We used to be able to travel to the nearby towns with public transport...”*. For some years, however, certain alternatives were provided by RMGC to those who worked for the Company, such as daily buses to the city, meaning that for the employees life remained normal for a little longer. This stopped entirely after 2013 when the Company started losing ground.

Hence, villages faced significant challenges after RMGC’s retreat. The lack of job opportunities and inadequate infrastructure – which would otherwise open possibilities of self-employment or entrepreneurship in tourism – hampers their ability to envision a stable future in Roșia Montană, leading outmigration. The local economy, struggling to diversify due to political roadblocks, has yet to provide sufficient alternatives. Many young adults work in nearby towns or even abroad, sending remittances back home to support their families. This trend contributes to the phenomenon of “brain drain,” where the most educated and capable individuals leave the community, further hindering its development. In fact, interactions with this group were the hardest part of the fieldwork, because so many people have moved out of the village despite not having sold their houses to RMGC. Only few remain, specifically those who are deeply attached to their families and who have found employment in the nearby area. Most information about the youth was gathered from the lens of their parents, who pointed out that as long as the village does not improve its physical infrastructure, they doubt whether their children could ever move back and have decent living conditions.

There are also younger children in the village, under the age of 18, yet conditions remain precarious in terms of education, medical amenities and extracurricular programs, also mainly due to a lack of political support. Besides limited facilities at school (e.g. the lack of a proper playing area, a lack of books and notebooks), parents also worry about a lack of afterschool activities. If they want to enrol their children in music lessons, dance classes or sports, families have to commute to Abrud or Câmpești, and the costs quickly add up for them. The words of one interviewee precisely capture this challenge:

*“Life in Roșia Montană is rather expensive due to a lack of infrastructure. If I bring my kids to an activity in the city, I also have to pay for gas, get snacks for on the way, and I also have to kill some time in the city as I wait for them for a few hours. At the same time, there is no better place to raise children than in Roșia Montană, it is safe here. Girl friends from the city always ask me ‘How do you feel so at peace leaving your kid*

*walk on their own everywhere?!’”* (Interviewee #7, personal communication, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024).

#### 4.2.7 Orientation towards Common Good

*“The time needed for a community to heal, with all its components, after such trauma and such a type of intervention, which was incredibly structured and by the book, meaning it was something that wasn’t done here for the first time. This is how mining companies behave in the communities they intervene in. It’s straight out of the manual.”* (Interviewee #5, personal communication, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024).

In Roşia Montană, local grassroots leadership and mobilization efforts have played a crucial role in shaping the community’s trajectory, particularly in the face of external pressures and internal divisions. The journey towards cohesive community action has been marked by both scepticism and incremental progress over the past three decades. As presented in the previous layer, most development initiatives come from local grassroots initiatives, most being organised as non-governmental organisations. Initially, community members were hesitant to affiliate with NGOs or tourism initiatives, but over time dialogues and collaborations have emerged, improving acceptance of tourism as a viable economic pathway (Interviewees #5, #6, #21, personal communications, May 2024).

I argue that all the grassroots efforts of the past decades, which Leonte (2018) has extensively covered, represent, in fact, a case of imagination infrastructuring. The most grounded example is the *Adoptă o Casă în Roşia Montană*<sup>24</sup> program organised by *ARA* (Adoptă o Casă la Roşia Montană NGO, n.d.). It intentionally creates a supportive environment and processes that facilitate the use of cultural heritage to nurture the community’s collective imagination. Over time, it has successfully promoted restoration and sustainability over decay, giving hope to locals. Below are the ways in which the main concepts of my theoretical framework show up in *ARA*’s work:

⇒ *Imagination Materials*: The program draws upon the rich cultural heritage of Roşia Montană, including stories about the village’s mining past, traditional architecture, materials and building techniques.

---

<sup>24</sup> EN: Adopt a House in Roşia Montană

⇒ *Collective Imagination*: Focusing on heritage conservation and community-led development, the program creates a shared vision for Roşia Montană’s future.

⇒ *Social Cohesion*: As community members work together to restore and preserve historical buildings, their cooperation and solidarity grow. This enhanced social cohesion supports the development of new Imagination Materials, like stories of successful restorations and cultural revival, further enriching the community’s collective imagination.

Another prominent figures in local grassroots leadership is Mr. Tică Darie, a young entrepreneur who decided to move to the village and start the social business *Made in Roşia Montană* (TEDx Talks & TEDxCluj, 2019). For the past decade, Mr. Darie has been motivated to also make political changes in the community, trying to win the city hall from Mr. Eugen Furdui. Mr. Darie thus decided to run for mayor yet another time for the local elections which took place on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024. His campaign, focusing on improving community-wellbeing and bringing people together once again, became a rallying cry for those seeking to reclaim their community’s future. Moreover, his plans included clear steps for leveraging Roşia Montană’s cultural heritage for sustainable tourism, as well as other development plans in terms of



Figure 21 Late-night consultation meeting with Mr. Darie’s campaign supporters (personal archive, May 2024)

infrastructure which are in dire need by the locals. Mr. Darie’s statement was, from the beginning, “*Mie nu-mi e frică de UNESCO*” (EN: I am **not** afraid of UNESCO), conveying that, unlike Mr. Furdui who weaponized the World Heritage Site status as argument to why local development has stagnated entirely, he can leverage the status for village’s interests.

Overall, Mr. Darie’s efforts illustrated the complexities of mobilising a community that has experienced significant socio-economic upheaval. Initially, his campaign faced scepticism, with only 15-20 people attending the majority of the meetings. Interestingly, the main argument behind people’s hesitance was the fact that he is a so-called “*vinitură*”<sup>25</sup>. During the campaign,

---

<sup>25</sup> EN: strangeling – regional word

which lasted approximately the entire month of May, different people met up and brainstormed together what is needed by the community to improve livelihoods and create development alternatives. “*Nu vă fie frică, Roșia se ridică!*”<sup>26</sup> became the motto of the movement, encouraging people to not be afraid of associating themselves to changemakers. Social media also played an important role for mobilising and reaching people. Over the course of a few weeks, the numbers of supporters grew to around 100 individuals, reflecting a gradual shift in public support. Despite this progress, the overall impact of Tică’s movement was limited, gathering only half of the votes he would have needed to win, highlighting the deep-rooted scepticism and division within the village. Thus, Mr. Eugen Furdui was re-elected, leaving Mr. Darie’s supporters – both at local and national level – disappointed.

The analysis of Roșia Montană’s historical, socio-economic, and cultural context reveals a complex web of community dynamics and evolving perceptions. The village’s identity, once flourishing thanks to its traditional mining heritage, has been profoundly influenced by industrial-scale mining. It is especially the contentious arrival of Gabriel Resources/RMGC that has deeply scarred the community, affecting the local economy, environment, social relations, and collective imagination in ways that are extremely hard to quantify. In terms of social cohesion, the residents of Roșia Montană exhibit a unique blend of tight-knit relationships and deep-seated divisions, particularly along the lines of their stance on mining. The community’s attachment to the village is palpable, with individuals expressing a profound sense of pride and longing for better livelihoods within their own locality. However, efforts to work together towards common goals are often hampered by lingering mistrust and reluctance to associate with those holding opposing views on mining. This complex social landscape is further complicated by uneven resource distribution, varying quality of life, and differing levels of heritage awareness and appreciation.



---

<sup>26</sup> EN: “Don’t be afraid, Roșia will rise!”

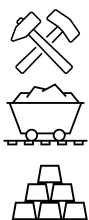
## 5. Discussion & Recommendations

In this chapter, I will explore the implications of the research findings and will connect them to the previous relevant literature. This discussion will also delve into the concept of *imagination deinfrastructuring*, a term I am coining to describe the systematic dismantling of imaginative capacities and infrastructures. This concept does not exist in the current literature, but it is crucial for understanding the interplay between historical legacies, power dynamics, and socio-economic factors within the Roșia Montană community.

### 5.1 Main Imaginaries and Current Tensions

The imaginaries in the village of Roșia Montană have been significantly shaped by the historical events of the past century, which were inherently linked to deep socio-economic transformations and power dynamics. From the data collected, it is clear that three main periods have distinctly influenced the collective imagination of the community: the pre-communist artisanal mining era (until 1947<sup>27</sup>), the communist industrialization phase (after 1947, and especially after 1970 when Cetate Quarry opened), and the post-communist shift towards sustainability and cultural preservation (emerging in the late 1990s with the arrival of Gabriel Resources). These time frames have resulted into three corresponding imaginaries, which were extrapolated by analysing the distinct socio-economic transformations and power dynamics that characterized each historical period. These imaginaries are still relevant nowadays as they explain many tensions which are present at local level, acknowledging that different segments of the community may hold varying imaginaries simultaneously – mix which often feels contradictory to the outside observer (Sevastre, 2017, p. 69):

A) The Artisanal Imaginary: This imaginary builds onto the community's historical reliance paired with a strong and unique sense of identity and belonging (Bocaniciu, 2019). In that sense, the history of the area had been shaped positively by the existing underground resources through path dependence (Dunn, 2021; Mahoney, 2000; Tangenberg, 2019). As a result, pride is a foundational element of this first imaginary, as it stems from generations of skilled craftsmanship and a deep connection to the land (Rus, 2021) – may it be for mining or small-scale sustenance farming which supported the population over time (Sevastre, 2017, pp. 63–66, 2017; Velicu, 2019; Velicu & OGREZeanu, 2022). The *Artisanal* worldview is also intrinsically linked to the fact that mining still happened underground. This created an emotionally and spiritually complex experience and identity, as the



---

<sup>27</sup> During the Kingdom of Romania (Hitchins, 2014)

underground world was dominated by entirely different forces as the outer world – the mountains were both a source of existence and quite literally your demise (Sevastre, 2017, pp. 56–57) The imaginary is thus associated with symbols such as the hammer and pick, the stamp mills and the accumulation lakes (*tăuri*, in Romanian), and underground mining (Asociația Roșia Montană în Patrimoniul Mondial, 2024). This past fundamentally differentiates Roșia Montană from other rural or semi-urban areas in Romania, as it is the only gold mining region in the country. This nowadays creates a sense of nostalgia for a somewhat distant past which only few still remember.

B) *The Utilitarian Imaginary*: The second imaginary has emerged through the communists' introduction of industrial mining, which induced a stark shift towards a utilitarian perspective on the underground resources and a disregard for the natural environment (Udoudom, 2021). This perspective values economic growth, efficiency, and large-scale extraction, prioritizing these goals over environmental sustainability and traditional practices. The narrative of economic growth and large-scale open-pit extraction quickly became dominant and led to the erosion of the artisanal gold mining physical infrastructure (such as the stamp mills), essentially disconnecting the community from its centuries-old identity (C. Apostol & CreativeMornings HQ, 2019; Asociația Roșia Montană în Patrimoniul Mondial, 2024). The utilitarian perspective often clashed with the community's traditional pride, as the emphasis on industrial efficiency and productivity led to the erosion of artisanal practices and the start of disconnection from the land. In the post-communist period, this imaginary has been perpetuated by corporate interests and some state authorities who view large-scale mining projects as essential for economic development (Soare & Tufiş, 2021; Velicu, 2014, 2019). Velicu (2012) and Sevastre (2017) argue that, in many ways, RMGC's subsequent arrival morphed the utilitarian perspective into an almost utopian dream of prosperity, optimism and revival. However, for the opponents of the project, this turned the utilitarian imaginary into a dystopian reality which they suddenly had to face – the gold had lost its positive connotations from the *Artisanal Imaginary*, and instead is spoken about as a “curse” (Sevastre, 2017, p. 56).

Interestingly, the shift towards the utilitarian perspective did not entirely eradicate the local sense of pride over the artisanal mining past. Instead, it transformed it. For some, pride of “being a native roșian”, in other words being born in the village, became intertwined with the perceived modernity and progress brought by industrial mining – especially for those who had worked for RMGC (Sevastre, 2017, pp. 35–36). This feeling is still lingering

nowadays but seems to mostly be fuelled by a need of viable economic activities – and an inability to see alternatives – and less so as an active push for open-pit mining. As a result, the narrative of economic decline and the unmet promises of revitalization by RMGC have become central to this imaginary. Characterized by broken promises and unfulfilled potential, from both Gabriel Resources and the Romanian government, this reinforces a collective sense of disillusionment.

However, for many others, the pride in their artisanal heritage turned into a form of resistance against the industrial model imposed by external forces (Roth, 2024), aiming to protect the local cultural identity, paving the shift towards the next imaginary.

C) *The Sustainability & Heritage Imaginary*: This imaginary has emerged particularly since the late 1990s, in response to the RMGC project, and is rooted in environmentalism and



cultural preservation. It is not only the result of a deep rejection of the capitalistic developments which allowed the RMGC project to emerge in the first place, but also follows a global trend towards sustainability and environmental awareness (Alexandrescu, 2020). This imaginary stems precisely from friction between the values promoted by the *Utilitarian Imaginary* and those of environmentalism: short-term financial gain vs long-term prosperity, natural degradation vs natural restoration, and extractivism vs sustainable economies. It represents a rejection of active mining being the only alternative for the village's prosperity, and instead advocates for Roșia Montană's invaluable past and connection to the land to be leveraged for alternative economic pathways. The shift was and continues being catalysed by local, national and international activism advocating for a future where ecological restoration, heritage conservation and sustainable economic diversification become central to the community (O. Apostol et al., 2023). Hence, this imaginary tries to reconcile the longing for the *Artisanal Imaginary* with the aspirations for a better socio-economic future by essentially advocating a “museified” version of what Roșia Montană used to be, under its UNESCO recognition (Alexandrescu, 2020). However, the transition to this imaginary is not sufficiently supported by local authorities, which has led people to be fearful of it happening (evident from Mr. Darie's campaign) as they realize the skills gap needed to make the imaginary truly performative.

The interactions between the three imaginaries can be observed in *Figure 22* below:



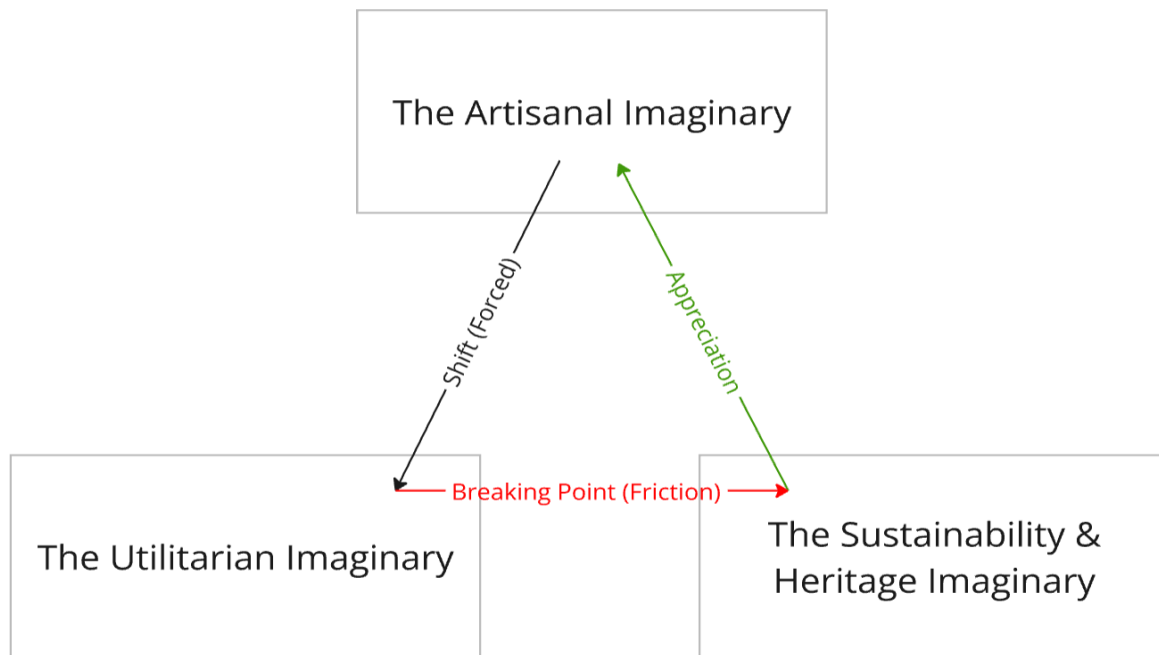


Figure 22 The Three Imaginaries (source: own work)

Hence, the challenge in Roşia Montană lies in reconciling the tension created by the shift from the second towards the third imaginary, which was only exacerbated by the improper closure of Cetate Quarry. The clash between these two perspectives is not only a political contest, as witnessed during the local elections, but also a sign of a deeper fracture within the community as each side blames each other for keeping the village stuck in terms of development. This essentially stems from fundamental differences in values, priorities and visions for the future. This was especially evident during the campaign of Mr. Darie, who strongly advocated for the *Sustainability & Heritage Imaginary*, emphasizing the importance of sustainable economic diversification, ecological restoration and cultural preservation. He faced stark opposition from supporters of the *Utilitarian Imaginary*, who find sustainability initiatives as overly idealistic and insufficient for addressing the immediate economic needs of the community. Interestingly, the latter group did not explicitly state that large-scale mining should happen either, but left their thoughts open to interpretation instead.

The differing viewpoints between proponents of industrial mining and cultural heritage advocates often thus lead to tacit conflicts over development priorities. For example, despite the potential and existing expertise for tourism and cultural revitalization, what seem to be intentional bureaucratic barriers hinder the establishment of new economic alternatives and amenities. It took many locals a long time to become used to the idea of tourism development

in the first place and viewed visitors strictly as intruders – signalling a subtle shift in imaginaries. However, even though becoming more open to this economic pathway, the community faces an identity crisis as it lacks the practical skills to adapt to the *Sustainability & Heritage Imaginary*, i.e. how to open and manage a business in the tourism industry. Without proper interventions, diverging imaginaries make it challenging to build consensus between immediate economic needs and the long-term vision of sustainability, precisely because the shift in imaginaries need an infrastructure to latch onto. This imagination infrastructure could be professional retraining, which would have been part of the de-facto closure of the Cetate Quarry, but that did not happen and it is unclear when and if it ever will (S. D. Roth, personal communication, June 29, 2024). This resulted in a perpetuating cycle of economic vulnerability and social fragmentation, with only few that possess an entrepreneurial spirit managing to thrive.

## 5.2 The Elephant in the Room: Imagination Deinfrastructuring

My first physical encounter with Roșia Montană revealed a different reality than what I had expected. For a long time, media depictions of the village showcased little hope of substantial sustainable development– mostly emphasizing values of the *Utilitarian Imaginary* in order to push the relocation of villagers (Sevastre, 2017). However, the reality was fundamentally different in one critical way. Namely, the imagination materials and infrastructures needed for cohesion, such as civic spaces, tight-knit relationships between generations and histories of place (Robinson, 2023b), had existed in the past, but were later intentionally and meticulously dismantled. In concrete terms, the village became significantly more neglected around the time when the PUG had been modified in 2002 – the underlying motive being a push for outmigration (Sevastre, 2017, pp. 45–47; Velicu, 2012). Essentially, the Company’s operations represent attempts at *repressive erasure* – which Fredrikzon & Haffenden (2023) define as the deliberate, state-centred actions aimed at obliterating historical records, cultural identities and memories. While physical erasure, i.e. the demolition of heritage sites, was luckily stopped via legal procedures (Roth, 2024; Roth & Maier, 2016), the social erasure continued silently for decades. Thus, there has always been an elephant in the room when talking about the development of Roșia Montană.

Typical explanations of the social transformations in Roșia Montană, such as economic determinism (Brites Pereira & Luiz, 2019) or population decline of rural areas (Burja & Burja, 2014), hence fall short for a variety of reasons. Although political decisions and historical mining practices have shaped the region through a path of dependence up for a long time

(Dunn, 2021, 2021; Tangenberg, 2019), it was only when the capitalistic venture of Gabriel Resources and its the targeted actions, such as deliberate suppression of local cultural heritage, exacerbated social fragmentation and disrupted collective imagination, just like in Wollar, Australia (Askland, 2018). Moreover, despite economic hardship and rural depopulation being common in peripheral regions (Burja & Burja, 2014; Weissenbacher, 2019), the rate of depopulation in Roșia Montană does not match other places in Romania (Velicu, 2012). Here, it was driven first by buyouts and then through the systematic dismantling of civic spaces and community infrastructure, the very foundations of the village's social and cultural life (Sevastre, 2017, p. 48), which erased the mental frame of a possible prosperous future in the village – *futures erasure*. Therefore, these rival explanations, individually or collectively, fail to capture the full extent and specific nature of the socio-economic and cultural upheavals instigated by RMGC's presence in Roșia Montană.

In literature, of erasing memories and cultural heritage is primarily discussed in terms of its impact on relating to the past, through the removal or alteration of evidence of certain events or infrastructure (Apaydin, 2020; Aydin, 2017; Bohleber, 2007; Brewer, 2016; Fredrikzon & Haffenden, 2023; Landzelius, 2003). According to these studies, this practice is well-documented in contexts such as war, terrorism, and authoritarian regimes, where the objective is to control historical narratives and suppress dissent – just as the communists' effort to erase Roșia Montană's *Artisanal Imaginary* through a forced disconnect from ownership and means of production, or RMGC's attempt to hide archaeological findings in the village (Sevastre, 2017). At the same time, *past erasure* also impacts a community's ability to imagine and build a prosperous future, which is not often addressed by academic literature (Feola et al., 2023).

During my fieldwork, it became evident that the roșieni were not inherently devoid of a collective vision for development or well-being but had instead lost faith in its possibility, meaning that their imagined future had been erased. The systematic dismantling of their collective identity has left them disillusioned, fragmented, and struggling to envision a coherent future. This reflects a broader pattern of systemic injustice and social inequity, manifesting as chaotic and uncertain future projections (Alexandrescu, 2020, Chapter The Industrial Landscape: 'Sterilizing' History and Displacing People). To better explore the implications of this phenomenon, it is essential to first reflect on the theoretical framework: If we understand imagination infrastructuring as a continuous process which contributes to collective

imagination and social cohesion, it is sensible to expect that the opposite can also happen, where systematic efforts can dismantle these imaginative capacities.

Hence, I define *imagination deinfrastructuring* as the deliberate and systematic erosion of the structures and practices that support a community’s imaginative capacities with regards to the future. As it is the opposite mechanism of imagination Infrastructuring, this new concept fits similarly into a conceptual model presented earlier in this thesis, which has now been adapted in *Figure 23*. That means deinfrastructuring has a negative effect on collective imagination and social cohesion, disrupting the imaginary:

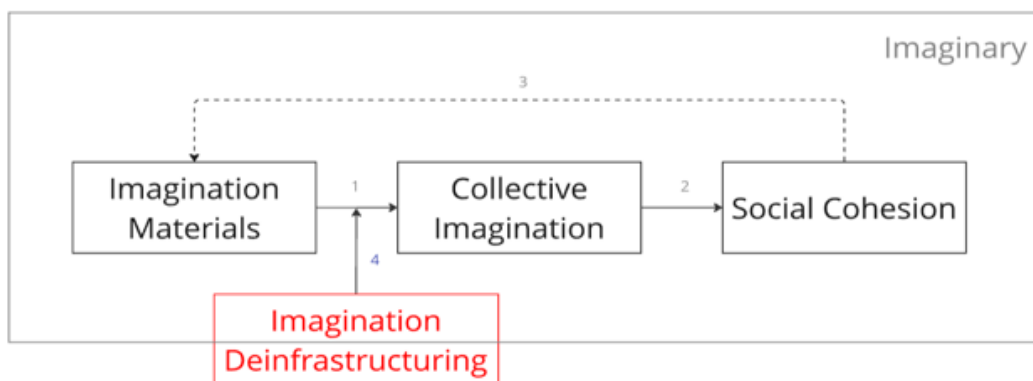


Figure 23 *Imagination Deinfrastructuring* (source: own work)

Imagination deinfrastructuring in Roşia Montană can easiest be investigated through the lens of extractive frontiers, namely how large-scale mining operations transform the social, material and political aspects of daily life (Frederiksen, 2024). By breaking it down into these three categories, it is easier to analyse how certain deinfrastructuring attempts have affected the village over the past three decades also through the framework of Fonseca et al. (2019). Each section below aims to explain by providing specific examples from the data.

### Social Deinfrastructuring

This type of deinfrastructuring is related to the concept of “*broken time*” – a disruption of temporal continuity experienced by individuals in communities affected by large-scale extractive projects (Askland, 2018). In Roşia Montană, many residents – especially the adults and the elderly – are deeply aware of the disconnection between their identity *before* and the one *after RMGC’s arrival*. Shared traditions and practices have disappeared over time, for example the weekly farmer’s market and festivities such as the Winter Ball on Lake Brazi (Bocaniciu, 2019). This is a type of temporal dislocation, where the past, present, and future no longer align in a coherent narrative of what life should or could have been like. Perhaps, if

not for RMGC, Roșia Montană would have seen a more equitable economic transition after the closure of Cetate Quarry. This *broken time* thus manifests itself as a feeling of being stranded in a present that has been severed from the anticipated future, creating a state of persistent uncertainty.

Similarly to broken time, the roșieni have also experienced *broken space*: the place has become an abstract concept or a symbol on its own (Chiper, 2012, p. 100). Chiper explains that Roșia Montană has become for many simply an “‘object’ [which] only exists at the level of discourse” (p.100), because what is left of the village is a tiny fraction of its past. Alexandrescu (2020) further supports the argument of *broken space* through the lens of topogenesis, a process through which a place is transformed into a global commodity through experience-distancing – the distancing from local identity and memory. Distancing, in this case, took the form of displacement, cultural erasure, reframing of the local economy and policy and legal changes (Alexandrescu, 2020). Thus, the original meanings and attachments of the individuals and the whole community have been overshadowed by the place’s new identity as a globally contested commodity – a further dissemination of the *Utilitarian Imaginary*. The opposite can also happen – experience nearing – as some individuals, such as the activists of *Alburnus Maior* also went through experience-nearing, which led them to further attach their own identity to the specific place and history of Roșia Montană. Each person now sees something different when referring to the village, depending on how they individually lived the processes of experience-distancing or experience-nearing. This divergence of pasts naturally translates into divided visions about and for the future, or the lack thereof (Bendor et al., 2021).

The traumatic series of events orchestrated by RMGC have left indelible scars on the collective psyche which was, and still is felt by people in the most intimate and personal ways. Moreover, while natural, internal, community dynamics played a role in the disruption of the social fabric, the significant escalation of conflicts and mistrust can be directly traced to RMGC’s divisive strategies and manipulation of local narratives (Velicu, 2012). Many residents find themselves in what Askland (2018) calls “involuntary immobility”, which is essentially a state of functional freeze, unable to break from vicious patterns in terms of decision-making. This also explains why many roșieni are still unsure whether tourism can truly work in their village, despite agreeing that mining is not a sustainable solution either (Velicu & Kaika, 2017). This aspect was especially evident during Mr. Darie’s campaign, when most envisioned the future as a linear continuation of the present, with no changes being remotely possible. Thus:

- ⇒ *Institutional Layer*: Institutions failed to protect cultural heritage, allowing RMGC to dominate with a mining-centric narrative for decades.
- ⇒ *Community Layer*: This weakened the community's collective identity and disrupted shared traditions, which is very noticeable especially looking at the three different generations.
- ⇒ *Individual Layer*: Residents' sense of belonging is laden with conflicting feelings and narratives and created a mistrust towards alternative economic pathways, weakening progress towards the *Sustainability & Heritage Imaginary*.

### Material Deinfrastructuring

The village of Roșia Montană experienced significant material changes due to the closure of healthcare facilities, educational institutions, and public transportation services, removing essential services and disrupting the educational continuity of the community (Alexandrescu, 2020; Asociația Roșia Montană în Patrimoniul Mondial, 2024; Bocaniciu, 2019; Botezan et al., 2020; Sevastre, 2017). The dispensary, doctor's office and the dentist's office were shut down soon after RMGC's arrival. Public transportation to nearby cities was discontinued, isolating the village and limiting residents' mobility and access to broader economic and social networks. This control and dismantling of physical infrastructure were, in the interviewees' view, a way in which the Company exerted influence over their daily lives (Alexandrescu, 2011; Velicu, 2019; Velicu & Kaika, 2017). This resulted in a deep dependence on RMGC's services and presence, as they offered certain alternatives for their workers – and a majority of the villagers were employed by them (Levei et al., 2011).

Furthermore, RMGC's presence has also led to the physical degradation of several historically and culturally significant sites: churches, the cultural centre and the underground mines, which used to be associated with local traditions and collective memory (Fredrikzon & Haffenden, 2023; Landzelius, 2003). The damage affects not only the physical outlook of the village but also the community's ability to engage in traditional ceremonies and storytelling. Sacred sites in Roșia Montană are more than just physical locations; they are deeply intertwined with the community's multicultural and spiritual fabric (Adoptă o Casă la Roșia Montană NGO, 2021). The destruction or contamination of these sacred spaces disrupts the continuity of these practices, leading to a significant fragmentation of community identity and cohesion (Leyton-Flor & Sangha, 2024).

- ⇒ *Institutional Layer*: Government and local institutions have prioritized RMGC's interests for decades, neglecting investment in essential services and infrastructure, such as water treatment, roads, healthcare etc. This allows environmental and social degradation to continue.
- ⇒ *Community Layer*: This isolates the village socially and economically, lowering quality of life and economic opportunities, which is further exacerbated by the lack of a PUG.
- ⇒ *Individual Layer*: Individuals face daily challenges due to the absence of essential services, which hinders their ability to envision a positive future for themselves in the village. This individual struggle feeds back into the community layer, as it is a feeling which people often discuss about among themselves.

The village of Wollar, Australia, experiences something very similar – essential services and social hubs were systematically shut down as the population dwindled to property buyouts by a multinational mining company, which only further exacerbated the community's sense of loss and disempowerment (Askland, 2018). Frederiksen (2024) observed similar instances in Ghana, Peru, and Zambia, where extractive companies frequently take on roles traditionally held by the state, providing infrastructure, healthcare, education, and even security. And, as Desjardins et al. (2002) explained, social cohesion within a community is heavily dependent on the availability of services for that community. Thus, the deinfrastructuring created a dependency that undermined local governmental authority and reshaped community expectations and interactions with institutions.

### Political Deinfrastructuring

Mining companies' involvement in governance typically results in a spatial reconfiguration of power, where the material and infrastructural transformations directly influence community subjectivities (Frederiksen, 2024). The dynamics of extractive frontiers thus led to the marginalization of local governance and an increased dependency on corporate governance. In the case of Roșia Montană, this is more noticeable than any of the other deinfrastructured layers due to the “politics of scale” (Vela-Almeida et al., 2018) – power and decision-making being constructed and contested at geographical and political levels (national and international) far beyond the control of the local community. Furthermore, RMGC's quasi-governmental role in providing services and infrastructure effectively weakened local governance structures, reducing the community's capacity to self-govern and advocate for its own interests (Frederiksen, 2024). This centralization of decision-making power in the hands



of RMGC and national government bodies meant that local political autonomy was undermined, and the community's needs and aspirations were subordinated to the demands of global capital and extractive industries (Alexandrescu, 2020). Additionally, RMGC's control over local media and narratives manipulated local perceptions and suppressed opposition, affecting the community's political discourse and resistance efforts (Velicu & Kaika, 2017). This manipulation of political spaces further entrenched the extractive frontier dynamics, making it difficult for the community to envision and pursue alternative futures.

The community was further affected by strategies of inclusion and exclusion used by RMGC, which led to a new socio-political hierarchy within the community, intensifying existing inequalities (Frederiksen, 2024; Velicu, 2012). According to interviewees and to Velicu (2012), those who stayed behind faced many financial consequences and were continuously being intimidated by the Company, and as an extension also by local authorities who sided with the Company, in order to leave. Additionally, RMGC's consultation processes had become the main avenues for community interaction and decision making, sidelining local government and leadership structures (Velicu, 2019; Velicu & Kaika, 2017). This shift resulted in a loss of community autonomy and a weakened ability to self-govern, as the reliance on company-led initiatives for basic services and infrastructure grew.

- ⇒ *Individual Layer*: Individuals lost trust in local and national governmental institutions, which diminishes their faith in the potential for positive change. The uncertainty caused by legislative limbos affects individuals' ability to plan for the future, creating a sense of instability and insecurity.
- ⇒ *Community Layer*: The community's ability to organize and advocate for its interests is weakened by the lack of strong institutional support. Community initiatives tend to be initiated by more-or-less the same group of people, others feeling discouraged to get involved.
- ⇒ *Institutional Layer*: The lack of legislative clarity reflects institutional failure to provide a stable framework for economic development. Inter-institutional cooperation is slow and faces roadblocks, which feeds back into individuals' mistrust of institutions.

Frederiksen (2024) has observed similar deinfrastructuring events in Latin America, which communities struggled to bounce back from. Thus, addressing the interconnected impacts holistically is of uttermost importance for rebuilding a community's identity and wellbeing, as well as empowering their visions for the future.

### 5.3 Reimagining the Future

Generally, initiatives aimed at economic diversification often struggle to achieve lasting change when they lack sufficient institutional support (Mikulcak et al., 2013, 2015, p. 253). In Roşia Montană, the absence of a clear and sustainable economic strategy backed by local political leadership has left the roşieni unable to find a common vision for their future. Deepening divisions and fostering scepticism towards both local and external actors. This has triggered skepticism towards both local and external actors aiming at change, as resources remain scarce without political support. My interviews and observations reveal that this challenge is acutely felt by all local initiatives in Roşia Montană.

Despite all challenges, the community's collective imagination has also been a source of inspiration and action. NGOs present in Roşia Montană, such as *ARA, Roşia Montană în Patrimoniul Mondial*, and *Trai cu Rost* – see Leonte (2018) for more details – as well as *Alburnus Maior* and the *Save Roşia Montană* movement exemplify how collective action and shared narratives can awaken support and drive change. These grassroots initiatives have leveraged the power of collective imagination to resist the detrimental impacts of industrial mining and advocate for sustainable development and cultural preservation, which is precisely what won the village its UNESCO recognition as a World Heritage Site. Their success in halting RMGC's operations highlights the transformative power of collectives to reshape local narratives and foster a renewed sense of identity and purpose. And, last but not least, their active implication at local level has played a crucial role in supporting individuals to recover from the traumas they have endured the past three decades, in line with the findings of González-Hidalgo et al. (2022) with regards to how emotional healing can be facilitated by NGOs in sites which have experienced conflict.

Conscious efforts through bottom-up initiatives accelerate the shift towards the *Sustainability & Heritage Imaginary*, which has undoubtedly already begun (Botezan et al., 2020; Leonte, 2018; Velicu, 2019). The current strive towards sustainable tourism represents a deliberate effort to rebuild community networks and cultural identities. Leonte (2018) argues that the presence of threats led to the reframing of environmental and social injustices into opportunities for better livelihoods. These efforts to legitimize alternative economic activities were sparked by a rejection of the conventional capitalistic development model that threatened the community (Leonte, 2018, p. 49). The village's collective psyche is thus being rejuvenated through initiatives that emphasize cultural heritage, environmental preservation, and community-led development.

Finally, the ICSID decision regarding Roșia Montană has significant implications for legitimizing the possibilities for imagining post-extractive futures. This ruling, which dismissed Gabriel Resources' claims against Romania, marks a critical shift in how communities can fight back against extractive industries. Essentially, it demonstrates that the efforts of local advocacy groups and international legal support can challenge corporate interests that threaten environmental and cultural heritage (Center for International Environmental Law, 2024). The ruling also restores a sense of agency and control to the local population, seen during Mr. Darie's campaign, who can now focus more on sustainable and community-driven development initiatives (European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights, 2024). This highlights the vital importance of grassroots movements and the influential force of collective imagination in fostering significant sustainability transformations. And yet, the shift towards the *Sustainability & Heritage Imaginary* could be further channelled and improved, which the next section will address.

#### 5.4 Recommendations

Thus far, efforts in Roșia Montană to diversify the local economy have not been sufficient to address the widespread unemployment and economic malaise to their roots. Therefore, it is crucial to adopt the concept of remembering forwards by Brewer (2016), which emphasizes that rather than being trapped by past traumas, one must actively remember to embrace truth, tolerance and togetherness in order to build a future which reconciles the past, present and the erased futures. The following advice for fostering imagination infrastructuring thus aims to strengthen social cohesion, economic stability, and cultural preservation as a way to remember forwards. More importantly, it is particularly tailored the potential limitations of institutional support in the foreseeable future, which otherwise is crucial for post-extractive transitions (Mikulcak et al., 2015; Stephan et al., 2015). As such, the focus is in this section on community-led initiatives that can meet as many needs as possible, which is generally advisable for rural development (Andreotti et al., 2012).

The idea is twofold, similarly to the case of Viscri (Cautiș, 2021; CNR UNESCO, 2021; Condrea, 2015; Iorio & Corsale, 2014; The Council of Europe Faro Convention, 2022; Wanner, 2017). First, it emphasizes imagination infrastructures aimed at enhancing skills and capacity building to ensure the community can effectively manage and benefit from new economic activities (Lopez & Pastor, 2015) – this is *infrastructuring of imagination*. Second, it proposes the creation of a community-based economy, in which economic gains get reinvested back in

the community directly, to enhance local resilience and self-sufficiency (Gibson-Graham, 2006) – representing *infrastructuring through imagination*.

### Skills and Capacity Building: Infrastructuring of Imagination

- *Tourism Workshops*: Organizing workshops to teach residents how to develop and manage tourism-related businesses is vital (The Council of Europe Faro Convention, 2022). Topics can include hospitality management, marketing, customer service, and the creation of tour packages that highlight Roșia Montană’s cultural and natural heritage. Residents could then effectively attract and accommodate tourists, providing a boost to the local economy and promoting the village’s unique assets, just like in Viscri.

- *Artisanal Skills Training*: Offering training programs to preserve and revive traditional crafts, such as weaving, shoemaking, wool processing, pottery, and woodworking, is another key recommendation (Abrudan & Turnock, 1998; Souca, 2019). These skills can be marketed to tourists and provide a source of income, which so far has worked well in Transylvania (Cautiș, 2021; Velicu, 2014).

- *Community Engagement and Governance*: Drawing inspiration from Viscri, the establishment of a Village Council and a Social Contract, which puts on paper the residents’ commitment to certain collective goals (Loewe et al., 2021), can enhance community governance and ensure that diverse community interests are represented in decision-making processes (Wanner, 2017). This inclusive governance model can help to build capacity through active participation in such a way that the entire community benefits from the initiatives undertaken (The Council of Europe Faro Convention, 2022).

### Community-based economic activities: Infrastructuring through Imagination

Following Gibson-Graham (2006), community-based economies are part of an economic framework which prioritizes development that is attuned to the needs and wellbeing of communities and is grounded in local sustainability. This concept is rooted in the principles of social capital, participatory decision-making and people over profit (Gibson-Graham, 2006, Chapter Introduction). CBEs focus on fostering resilience and self-sufficiency, as the limits to traditional economic growth are acknowledged, and promotes initiatives such as local cooperatives, artisanal crafts, cultural events, circular use of materials, eco-tourism and so on (Elsen, 2018). This can enhance local autonomy and fairness of decision making by improving participation, transparency and trust (Gruber, 2020). This can be done by encouraging the establishment of short supply chains, as they can further enhance local economies (Wanner, 2017). Prioritizing local production and consumption, they can reduce dependency on external

markets, support local producers, and ensure that economic benefits remain predominantly within the community of Roșia Montană.

These strategies would increase resilience by strengthening local self-sufficiency, fostering economic diversification, and enhancing community cohesion (Cretney & Bond, 2014; Fischer & McKee, 2017; Holtorf, 2018), ensuring that Roșia Montană can better withstand economic and social challenges. Moreover, they could help weave back the social fabric of the community, as well as re-creating certain informal risk-sharing dynamics which were previously dismantled. By fostering skills, capacity building, and community-based economic activities, Roșia Montană can thus remember forwards, integrating the lessons and heritage of the past into a sustainable and cohesive future.

## 5.5 Reflection

Reflecting on my journey throughout this research project, the complexities shaping Roșia Montană's community dynamics have become profoundly evident. It is clear that the improper closure of the Cetate Quarry, due to the overtake by RMGC, marked a significant turning point for Roșia Montană, ushering in a period of economic stagnation and social fragmentation. Nonetheless, RMGC's presence in Roșia Montană has diminished significantly over the past decade – nowadays one can barely tell there had ever been a conflict there, if not for the stories told by the residents and the abandoned houses. The last living signs of RMGC in the village has been TBL, its daughter company, which was less stringent to begin with and it is now rapidly dissolving too. However, any further attempts by Gabriel Resources to pursue mining in Roșia Montană exacerbates imagination deinfrastructuring and is thus a direct threat to the cultural heritage of the area.

Moreover, immersing myself in the residents' daily life and hearing firsthand accounts of their experience, from stories of their ancestors to their everyday contemporary struggles and joys, has provided invaluable insights which have turned this academic exploration also into a personal rediscovery. The stark contrast between the industrial past and the burgeoning hope for a sustainable future illustrates the delicate balance the community must navigate looking forwards. Witnessing the efforts of local NGOs, the enthusiasm of the youth, and the enduring spirit of the older generations has been both humbling and inspiring for me. These experiences have highlighted the critical role of grassroots initiatives and the power of collective imagination in driving meaningful change. At the same time, they have also underscored the pressing need for robust institutional support to realize these community-

driven visions fully. This research journey has reinforced my belief in the potential for communities to heal and thrive through solidarity, innovation, and a deep connection to their cultural heritage.

The case of Roșia Montană is thus also representative for understanding the broader dynamics at play in the European periphery, where communities often find themselves at the intersection of local traditions and global economic pressures (Alexandrescu, 2011; Weissenbacher, 2019). The systematic deinfrastructuring observed there underscores the impacts of external corporate interests on local socio-economic structures and collective imaginaries, situation which reflects a wider pattern across the European periphery, where extractive industries exploit natural resources at the expense of local communities' cultural and social fabric (Lazarević, 2024).

Lastly, would like to mention that after my return to the Netherlands I have had the chance to briefly present my fieldwork experience during the STREAM Kids' Science Fair in Eindhoven, an event organized by the Romanian diaspora in the Netherlands (Radio România Cultural, 2024). Most participants were unaware of what had happened in the village, as they only knew about the protests and political drama, but after learning about it they became eager to go visit and spread the word. I have attached my poster in Appendix A, for reference. I am grateful for the opportunity of expanding the knowledge on such a relevant case in Romania's recent history, and I believe that telling the roșieni's story will continue raising awareness to the injustices which have endured.



## 6. Conclusion

This study set out to explore how the dismantling of the social fabric in Roşia Montană and the interplay between collective imagination and social cohesion could impact the community's ability to envision and pursue sustainable development. The research questions aimed to understand how historical events, socio-economic factors, and power dynamics have shaped local imaginaries, how these divergent perspectives influence current community dynamics, and what strategies can be implemented to strengthen social cohesion in the face of ongoing challenges.

Answering these questions turned out to be rather complex in practice, as one could not be answered without thinking of the others. First, the research identified three distinct periods that have profoundly influenced Roşia Montană's collective imagination: the pre-communist artisanal mining era, the communist industrialization phase, and a post-communist shift, in parallel with RMGC's arrival, towards sustainability and cultural preservation. Each period has left an imprint on the community's identity and socio-economic dynamics nowadays, as they are directly associated with three corresponding imaginaries: the *Artisanal Imaginary*, the *Utilitarian Imaginary* and the *Artisanal & Heritage Imaginary*. The shift from the second to the third imaginary is still currently taking place, and it manifests in daily life through a tacit tension of how the future in Roşia Montană could look like now that extractivism is mostly out of the question. However, while most villagers accept the area's inclusion on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, they struggle seeing how this can be an opportunity for them to develop sustainably through tourism. Notably though, this stems mainly from a lack of experience in the hospitality industry, and not from a lack of openness to learn and adapt. At the same time, low institutional support from local authorities continues the socio-economic stagnation of the village (and the entire commune), its development mainly depending on the local grassroots initiatives.

These bottom-up initiatives, led by NGOs, have played and continue playing a crucial role in fostering social cohesion, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting sustainable development. Their efforts are not only mitigating the impacts of deinfrastructuring where possible, but also are revitalizing the community's sense of identity and purpose. However, the lack of robust institutional support remains a critical barrier for them to expand their capacity, scope and influence. Overall, the findings emphasize that while the community is actively working towards creating a more sustainable and cohesive future, external support and fair



governance structures are necessary to realize these goals and increase wellbeing. To inspire action despite potential institutional setbacks, this thesis provided several recommendations, centred around skill and capacity building and a community-based economy, which could be suitable for Roşia Montană.

In addressing the knowledge gap identified in the introduction, this research also advances the literature on futuring by highlighting how external forces can systematically undermine a community's capacity to envision and work towards alternative futures. By introducing and elaborating on the concept of imagination deinfrastructuring, this study provides a framework for understanding how these destructive processes operate and their long-term impacts on communities. This term has been coined and elaborated upon to describe the intentional and systematic dismantling of a community's imaginative capacities by external forces. The analysis conducted on Roşia Montană revealed how deinfrastructuring by RMGC has affected the individual, community, and institutional layers of social cohesion, leading to widespread disillusionment and social fragmentation. This theoretical advancement allows for a deeper exploration of how to rebuild and support imaginative capacities in post-extractive transitions, offering new insights into fostering wellbeing and sustainable development in affected communities.

Overall, this thesis contributes to the existing literature by providing a nuanced understanding of the interplay between collective imagination, social cohesion, and sustainable development in post-extractive communities. Presenting infrastructuring and deinfrastructuring as similar, yet opposite forces, it contributes to the current understanding of imaginaries in post-extractive transitions. Moreover, it highlights the potential role of imagination infrastructuring in addressing diverging perspectives in communities which have previously experienced injustices. The research project thus underscores the importance of integrating historical, socio-economic and political contexts into the futures' literature, enriching existing theoretical frameworks.

### 6.1 Limitations of this Research Project

It is also important to acknowledge the limitations of this thesis. Although the data gathered was rich and insightful, this study acknowledges several limitations that may have impacted the depth of the findings. First, due to logistical reasons and time constraints it was not possible to study the other villages that are part of the commune of Roşia Montană. This limited the scope of the research to the main village, potentially overlooking important

dynamics in the surrounding areas. Another limitation is that the study did not include interviews with younger people who have moved away from Roșia Montană. Their perspectives could have provided valuable insights into the generational shifts and the impact of migration on the community's social cohesion and collective imagination, which I hope other researchers will focus on in the future. However, this was partially mitigated by observing Mr. Darie's campaign, as people from nearby villages visited frequently and organized their own focus group discussions, showing a similar division in imaginaries between utilitarianism and sustainability, although less focused on mining.

Looking forward, a comparative case study with Viscri or another UNESCO village known for its mining heritage would be a valuable continuation of my research project. Such a comparison could highlight successful strategies and provide a broader context for understanding the challenges and opportunities in Roșia Montană. This can further be enriched by including interviews with government officials in charge of the village's heritage management and sustainable development, limitation which I had due to time constraints. Lastly, future research could investigate how inter-site comparisons and collaborations could look like and which benefits could they bring, especially among UNESCO sites.

## 6.2 Implications for Further Research

The findings of this study highlight several avenues for further research that could deepen the scholarly understanding of social cohesion, collective imagination, and sustainable development in post-extractive communities. One key area for further investigation is the role of emotional healing spaces in fostering collective imagination and driving socio-economic transformation, in continuation to the research of González-Hidalgo et al. (2022). As indicated by the emergence of such spaces in Roșia Montană, future research could explore how these areas can be systematically identified, enhanced, and leveraged to promote sustainable, community-led development. Moreover, understanding the specific practices and activities within these spaces that most effectively facilitate emotional healing and collective envisioning could provide valuable insights for other communities facing similar challenges.

Additionally, it would be beneficial to examine the impact of youth engagement and education programs on the social cohesion and sustainable development of Roșia Montană. Given the generational divide observed in the community, future research could focus on the long-term effects of involving younger generations in community projects and decision-making processes. Furthermore, it would be interesting to compare Roșia Montană to other

UNESCO sites, either in Romania or in other countries, to see how other development initiatives can help construct a thriving environment for the youth, without creating trade-offs in terms of environmental protection and quality of life.

Finally, the potential for community-based economies – as proposed by Gibson-Graham (2006) – to drive sustainable development in post-extractive regions warrants further exploration. Future studies could delve into the mechanisms through which CBEs can foster cohesion, self-sufficiency, and social capital within local communities that have experienced systematic injustices. Research should also investigate the challenges and barriers to implementing CBEs in areas where institutional support is not entirely guaranteed. Future research can build on the findings of this study, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of how to achieve sustainable and equitable development in communities transitioning from extractive industries.

All in all, I believe my experience in Roșia Montană has likely been unique compared to other researchers': I have witnessed a calm, quiet village where the signs of past conflicts are faint, remaining mostly in its stories. During my research and fieldwork, I saw multiple key events unfolding: the ICSID arbitration decision being announced, the local electoral campaign, the Children's Day Festival and the revocation of RMGC's mining license. Collaborative efforts to strengthen social cohesion and develop alternative economic pathways are crucial for unlocking the full potential of this metaphorical El Dorado. With inner strength, external support, and fair governance, Roșia Montană can transform its historical legacy into a thriving, sustainable future, and can serve as inspiration for other post-extractive communities around the world.



## 7. References

- Abrudan, I., & Turnock, D. (1998). A rural development strategy for the Apuseni Mountains, Romania. *GeoJournal*, 46(3), 319–336. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1006937023451>
- Adetunji, A., Silva, M., Tulsiani, N. J., & Adediran, M. (2023). “Like a broom tied together”: A qualitative exploration of social cohesion and its role in community capacity strengthening to support integrated health in Nigeria. *PLOS Global Public Health*, 3(10), e0002508. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pgph.0002508>
- Adoptă o Casă la Roșia Montană NGO. (n.d.). *About the Programme*. About the Programme. Retrieved September 14, 2023, from <https://www.adoptaocasa.ro/en/despre-program>
- Adoptă o Casă la Roșia Montană NGO. (2021, November 14). #podcast 2021 / ep. 5: Roșia Montană. *Comunitatea*. [Podcast]. <https://open.spotify.com/episode/1q0ZT01Toe7Y6JstXpeLDh>
- Aelbrecht, P., & Stevens, Q. (2019). *Public Space Design and Social Cohesion: An International Comparison*. Routledge.
- Agenția Națională pentru Resurse Minerale. (2024, June 20). *Comunicat de presă*. [https://www.namr.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2\\_comunicat-RMGC.pdf](https://www.namr.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2_comunicat-RMGC.pdf)
- Alba24.ro, R. (2023, May 6). *Târgul de Fete de pe Muntele Găina 2023, în 22-23 iulie. Tradiții și legende legate de cea mai mare sărbătoare a moșilor. PROGRAM*. <https://alba24.ro/targul-de-fete-de-pe-muntele-gaina-2023-in-22-23-iulie-traditii-si-legende-legate-de-cea-mai-mare-sarbatoare-a-motilor-977185.html>
- Albrecht, G., Sartore, G.-M., Connor, L., Higginbotham, N., Freeman, S., Kelly, B., Stain, H., Tonna, A., & Pollard, G. (2007). Solastalgia: The Distress Caused by Environmental Change. *Australasian Psychiatry*, 15(1\_suppl), S95–S98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10398560701701288>
- Albu, A., Satmari, A., Despi, A., Albu, B., Satmari, L., & Cengher, P. (2007). *Strategie Alternativă pentru o Dezvoltare Durabilă în Roșia Montană*. CULTOURS - Centrul de Turism Cultural. <https://ro.scribd.com/document/149371219/Strategie-Alternativa-Rosia-Montana-CULTOURS>

- Alexander, D., Tiron-Tudor, A., & Dragu, I. (2018). Implications of corporate accountability on civil society: The case of Rosia Montana Gold Corporation (RMGC). *Meditari Accountancy Research*, 26(1), 145–169. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MEDAR-10-2017-0233>
- Alexandrescu, F. (2011). GOLD AND DISPLACEMENT IN EASTERN EUROPE: RISKS AND UNCERTAINTY AT ROȘIA MONTANĂ. „*Revista Română de Sociologie*”, *Serie Nouă, Anul XXII, Nr. 1–2, p. 78–107, București, 2011.*
- Alexandrescu, F. (2020). *Social Conflict and the Making of a Globalized Place at Roșia Montană.*
- Alves, S. (2018). Understanding Intangible Aspects of Cultural Heritage: The Role of Active Imagination. *The Historic Environment: Policy & Practice*, 9(3–4), 207–228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17567505.2018.1517141>
- Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* Verso Books.
- Anderson-Levitt, K. M. (2006). Ethnography. In *Handbook of Complementary Methods in Education Research* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Andreotti, A., Mingione, E., & Polizzi, E. (2012). Local Welfare Systems: A Challenge for Social Cohesion. *Urban Studies*, 49(9), 1925–1940. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098012444884>
- Apaydin, V. (Ed.). (2020). *Critical Perspectives on Cultural Memory and Heritage: Construction, Transformation and Destruction.* UCL Press. <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.9781787354845>
- Apostol, C. & CreativeMornings HQ (Directors). (2019, May). *Claudia Apostol: It takes a village to preserve what matters.* [Presentation]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2m8i8o57cw>
- Apostol, O., Mäkelä, H., & Vinnari, E. (2023). Cultural sustainability and the construction of (in)commensurability: Cultural heritage at the Roșia Montană mining site. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 102577. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpa.2023.102577>
- Argüelles, L., Anguelovski, I., & Dinnie, E. (2017). Power and privilege in alternative civic practices: Examining imaginaries of change and embedded rationalities in community economies. *Geoforum*, 86, 30–41. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2017.08.013>
- Askland, H. H. (2018). A dying village: Mining and the experiential condition of displacement. *The Extractive Industries and Society*, 5(2), 230–236. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2018.02.007>

- Asociația Alburnus Maior. (2012, April 5). Victorie în instanță pentru Roșia Montană: Planurile de urbanism necesare RMGC au fost anulate irevocabil de Curtea de Apel Alba. *TOTB.ro*.  
<https://www.totb.ro/victorie-in-instanta-pentru-rosia-montana-planurile-de-urbanism-necesare-rmgc-au-fost-anulate-irevocabil-de-curtea-de-apel-alba/>
- Asociația Roșia Montană în Patrimoniul Mondial (Director). (2024, July 15). *Roșia Montană UNESCO Site Tour (playlist)* (1–28) [Audio/Video].  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cTRUZPE1ooM>
- Avelino, F., Hielscher, S., Strumińska-Kutra, M., de Geus, T., Widdel, L., Wittmayer, J., Dańkowska, A., Dembek, A., Fraaije, M., Heidary, J., Iskandarova, M., Rogge, K., Stasik, A., & Crudi, F. (2023). Power to, over and with: Exploring power dynamics in social innovations in energy transitions across Europe. *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, 48, 100758.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eist.2023.100758>
- Aydin, C. (2017). How to Forget the Unforgettable? On Collective Trauma, Cultural Identity, and Mnemotechnologies. *Identity*, 17(3), 125–137.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15283488.2017.1340160>
- Baibarac-Duignan, C., & Medeșan, S. (2023). ‘Gluing’ alternative imaginaries of sustainable urban futures: When commoning and design met in the post-socialist neighbourhood of Mănăștur, Romania. *Futures*, 153, 103233. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2023.103233>
- Bâlici, Ștefan. (2013). Roșia Montană. An overview on the question of cultural heritage. *Caiete ARA*, 4, 205–228.
- Balint-Kurti, D. (2019). *Global Witness calls on UK and US to investigate BP and ‘City bad boy’ Frank Timis*. Global Witness. <https://en/press-releases/global-witness-calls-on-uk-and-us-to-investigate-bp-and-city-bad-boy-frank-timis/>
- Barna, R. (2023). The Transformation of Commons in Roșia-Montană. Which Property Regimen for Which Development? *Revue de Géographie Alpine*, 111. <https://doi.org/10.4000/rga.11465>
- Barrett, M. J., Harmin, M., Maracle, B., Patterson, M., Thomson, C., Flowers, M., & Bors, K. (2017). Shifting relations with the more-than-human: Six threshold concepts for transformative

- sustainability learning. *Environmental Education Research*, 23(1), 131–143.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2015.1121378>
- Bass, R. (2003). Landscape and Imagination. *The Kenyon Review*, 25.
- Bendor, R., Eriksson, E., & Pargman, D. (2021). Looking backward to the future: On past-facing approaches to futuring. *Futures*, 125, 102666. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2020.102666>
- Bifulco, L., & Tirino, M. (2018). The Sports Hero in the Social Imaginary. Identity, Community, Ritual and Myth. *Im@go. A Journal of the Social Imaginary*, 11, Article 11.  
<https://doi.org/10.7413/22818138110>
- Bocaniciu, S. (2019). *Roșia Montană: O familie. Un secol. O poveste: Din arhiva fotografică a familiei Bocaniciu / Silviu Bocaniciu jr* (C. Apostol & V. Apostol, Eds.; G. Tîrlie & C. Lazăr, Trans.). Editura ARA - Arhitectură. Restaurare. Arheologie.  
<http://www.simpara.ro/Ro%C8%99ia-Montana:-O-familie--Un-secol--O-poveste-617.htm>
- Bohleber, W. (2007). Remembrance, trauma and collective memory: The battle for memory in psychoanalysis. *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 88(2), 329–352.  
<https://doi.org/10.1516/V5H5-8351-7636-7878>
- Boțan, C., Viorel, G., Pavel, H., & Fonogea, S.-F. (2015). Regional Identities within the European Union Case study: Țara Motilor (Romania). *Transylvanian Review*, XXIV, 307–318.
- Botezan, C., Constantin, V., Meltzer, M., Radovici, A., Pop, A., Alexandrescu, F., & Stefanescu, L. (2020). Is There Sustainable Development after Mining? A Case Study of Three Mining Areas in the Apuseni Region (Romania). *Sustainability*, 12(23), Article 23.  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/su12239791>
- Bouniol, J. (2013). Scramble for land in Romania: Iron fist in a velvet glove. *Land Concentration, Land Grabbing and People's Struggles in Europe*, 146–167.
- Brewer, J. (2016, May 17). *Remembering forwards: Or how to live together in the future with divided memories: Memory and the future.*
- Brites Pereira, L., & Luiz, J. M. (2019). Institutional drivers, historical determinism, and economic development in Mozambique. *International Journal of Emerging Markets*, 15(4), 767–789.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOEM-01-2019-0024>



- Burgess, J., Foth, M., & Klæbe, H. (2006). Everyday Creativity as Civic Engagement: A Cultural Citizenship View of New Media. In F. Papandrea (Ed.), *Proceedings 2006 Communications Policy & Research Forum* (pp. 1–16). Communications Policy & Research Forum, Australia. Network Insight Institute. <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/5056/>
- Burja, C., & Burja, V. (2014). SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AREAS: A CHALLENGE FOR ROMANIA. *Environmental Engineering and Management Journal*, 13(8), 1861–1871. <https://doi.org/10.30638/eemj.2014.205>
- Buțiu, C., & Pascaru, M. (2011). Sustainable Development and Concentric Public Participation. The Case of the Rosia Montana Gold Corporation Mining Project. *Journal of Environmental Protection and Ecology* 12, No 4A, 2236–2244 (2011), 12.
- Buzoianu, C., & Țoc, S. (2013). Misunderstanding opportunities: (Post-) resettlement issues in the Recea neighbourhood of Alba Iulia. *J. Comp. Res. Anthropol. Sociol*, 4, 21–40.
- Cancellieri, G., Turrini, A., Perez, M. J. S., Salido-Andres, N., Kullberg, J., & Cognat, A. S. (2018). Social Innovation in Arts & Culture: Place-Regeneration Initiatives Driven by Arts & Culture to Achieve Social Cohesion. In *Social Innovation*. Routledge.
- Cantó-Milà, N., & Seebach, S. (2024). Between temporalities, imaginaries and imagination: A framework for analysing futures. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 13684310241229208. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13684310241229208>
- Carrasco, M. A., & Bilal, U. (2016). A sign of the times: To have or to be? Social capital or social cohesion? *Social Science & Medicine*, 159, 127–131. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2016.05.012>
- Cautiș, E. (2021, May 26). *Interview: How the Mihai Eminescu Trust safeguards the Saxon villages in Transylvania*. European Heritage Tribune. <https://heritagetribune.eu/romania/interview-how-the-mihai-eminescu-trust-safeguards-the-saxon-villages-in-transylvania/>
- Caxaj, C. S. & Kolol Qnan Tx'otx' Parroquia de San Miguel Ixtahuacan. (2018). A community-based intervention to build community harmony in an Indigenous Guatemalan Mining Town. *Global Public Health*, 13(11), 1670–1681. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2018.1427273>

- Center for International Environmental Law. (2024, November 3). CIEL Joins Roșia Montană Community in Celebrating Historic End to Struggle. *Center for International Environmental Law*. <https://www.ciel.org/news/ciel-celebrates-rosia-montana-community/>
- Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining, & University of Queensland. (n.d.). *Mine closure overview*. Retrieved June 29, 2024, from <http://stories.uq.edu.au/smi/2022/csrm-mine-closure-hub/mine-closure-overview/index.html>
- Chan, J., To, H.-P., & Chan, E. (2006). Reconsidering Social Cohesion: Developing a Definition and Analytical Framework for Empirical Research. *Social Indicators Research*, 75(2), 273–302.
- Chiper, S. (2012). *Roșia Montană and Its Publics: Governance and Participatory Democracy at Community and Corporate Level*. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Ros%CC%A7ia-Montana%CC%86-and-Its-Publics%3A-Governance-and-at-Chiper/0b6850274d99677c0b888aaf77fabcdffb426d12>
- CititOra. (n.d.). *Facebook*. Retrieved June 25, 2024, from <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61558376573760>
- Cloete, A. (2014). Social cohesion and social capital: Possible implications for the common good. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 35(3). <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v35i3.1331>
- CNR UNESCO. (2021). *THE SOCIAL CONTRACT AND VILLAGE COUNCIL IN VISCRI*. [https://www.cnr-unesco.ro/admin/uploads/884\\_viscri%20village%20council.docx](https://www.cnr-unesco.ro/admin/uploads/884_viscri%20village%20council.docx)
- Conde, M. (2017). Resistance to Mining. A Review. *Ecological Economics*, 132, 80–90. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2016.08.025>
- Conde, M., & Le Billon, P. (2017). Why do some communities resist mining projects while others do not? *The Extractive Industries and Society*, 4(3), 681–697. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2017.04.009>
- Condrea, D. (2015, June 4). Viscri: The Saxon Village Where Traditions Came Back to Life. *Uncover Romania*. <https://www.uncover-romania.com/attractions/unesco-heritage-romania/viscri/>
- Cornea, Z. (2024). Scrisoare către Roșieni. *Ziarul Roșia se ridică*, 6.
- Corporate Europe Observatory (Director). (2019, June 23). *Save Roșia Montană: The fight against ISDS in Romania* [Video recording]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SwWGXbV5XIk>

- Coulson, M. (2012). *The History of Mining: The events, technology and people involved in the industry that forged the modern world*. Harriman House Limited.
- Cretney, R., & Bond, S. (2014). ‘Bouncing back’ to capitalism? Grass-roots autonomous activism in shaping discourses of resilience and transformation following disaster. *Resilience*, 2(1), 18–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21693293.2013.872449>
- Dani, A., Rubin, O., Sandu, D., & Wang, L. (2006). *Romania mining sector reform, 2006* (pp. 339–385).
- Dash, S. P., & Thilagam, N. L. (2023). “Creative placemaking”: A conceptual model fostering social cohesion in community spaces within residential environments. *Creativity Studies*, 16(2), Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.3846/cs.2023.16497>
- Davis, D., & Hatuka, T. (2014). *Imagination as a method for generating knowledge about possible urban futures*. *The routledge handbook of planning research methods*, 225–234.
- Delhey, J., Dragolov, G., & Boehnke, K. (2023). Social Cohesion in International Comparison: A Review of Key Measures and Findings. *KZfSS Kölner Zeitschrift Für Soziologie Und Sozialpsychologie*, 75(1), 95–120. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11577-023-00891-6>
- Desjardins, S., Halseth, G., Leblanc, P., & Ryser, L. (2002). *New Rural Economy Project*.
- Despa, O. (2021, July 21). Țară în service | Poveștile de aur ale oamenilor din Roșia Montană. *Europa Liberă România*. <https://romania.europalibera.org/a/rosia-montana-reportaj/31358595.html>
- Drozynski, C., & Beljaars, D. (2019). *Civic Spaces and Desire*. Routledge.
- Dumitrache, L., Zamfir, D., Nae, M. M., Simion, G., & Stoica, V. (2016). The Urban Nexus: Contradictions and Dilemmas of (Post)Communist (Sub)Urbanization in Romania. *HUMAN GEOGRAPHIES – JOURNAL OF STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN HUMAN GEOGRAPHIES*, 10(1), 38–50. <https://doi.org/10.5719/hgeo.2016.101.3>
- Dumitru, A. (2024, March 8). *România câștigă procesul Roșia Montană. Gabriel Resources trebuie să plătească statului 9,4 milioane de euro* | Digi24. <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/romania-castiga-procesul-rosia-montana-2716847>
- Dunn, J. (2021). Gold Mining Districts and Path Dependence. *Honors Theses*. <https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/honorsthesis/1292>

- Earthworks. (n.d.). *Environmental Impacts of Gold Mining*. Earthworks. Retrieved February 18, 2024, from <https://earthworks.org/issues/environmental-impacts-of-gold-mining/>
- Eisenhauer, D. C. (2023). Governance by and of Imagination: Outlining the Uses of Imagination within Urban Environmental Governance. *The Professional Geographer*, 75(2), 288–295. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00330124.2022.2062013>
- Elsen, S. (2018). *Eco-Social Transformation and Community-Based Economy*. Routledge.
- Enander, A., Lajksjö, Ö., & Tedfeldt, E.-L. (2010). A Tear in the Social Fabric: Communities Dealing with Socially Generated Crises. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 18(1), 39–48. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5973.2009.00596.x>
- European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights. (2024, August 3). *Roşia Montană World Heritage Site finally freed from the clutches of Canadian investors*. <https://www.ecchr.eu/en/press-release/rosia-montana-world-heritage-site-finally-freed-from-the-clutches-of-canadian-investors/>
- FânFest. (n.d.). *FânFest, patru zile de evenimente culturale la Roşia Montană—Asociatia MaiMultVerde*. Retrieved December 14, 2023, from <https://maimultverde.ro/fanfest-patru-zile-de-evenimente-culturale-la-rosia-montana/>
- Farkas, T. (2021). The Role of the Social Capital in Rural Development. Case Study Analysis of Village Research Camps in Romania and Hungary. *European Countryside*, 13(3), 584–598. <https://doi.org/10.2478/euco-2021-0033>
- Felt, U. (2015). The Temporal Choreographies of Participation: Thinking innovation and society from a time-sensitive perspective. In *Remaking Participation*. Routledge.
- Feola, G. (2019). Degrowth and the Unmaking of Capitalism: Beyond ‘Decolonization of the Imaginary’? *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 18(4), Article 4.
- Feola, G., Goodman, M. K., Suzunaga, J., & Soler, J. (2023). Collective memories, place-framing and the politics of imaginary futures in sustainability transitions and transformation. *Geoforum*, 138, 103668. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2022.103668>

- Fischer, A., & McKee, A. (2017). A question of capacities? Community resilience and empowerment between assets, abilities and relationships. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 54, 187–197.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2017.06.020>
- Fonseca, X., Lukosch, S., & Brazier, F. (2019). Social cohesion revisited: A new definition and how to characterize it. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 32(2), 231–253. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13511610.2018.1497480>
- Foster, J. C. (1985). The western dilemma: Miners, silicosis, and compensation. *Labor History*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00236568508584798>
- Fracaro, E. F. (2010). Social networks addressing group membership and identity from the concept/creative function of social imagination. *CEU Political Science Journal*, 03, 413–427.
- Frederiksen, T. (2024). Subjectivity and space on extractive frontiers: Materiality, accumulation and politics. *Geoforum*, 148, 103915. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2023.103915>
- Fredrikzon, J., & Haffenden, C. (2023). Towards erasure studies: Excavating the material conditions of memory and forgetting. *Memory, Mind & Media*, 2, e2.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/mem.2023.2>
- Frey, B. S. (1999). State Support and Creativity in the Arts: Some New Considerations. *Journal of Cultural Economics*, 23(1), 71–85. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1007518203490>
- Gabriel Resources. (2023, June 28). *Notice of 2023 Annual General Meeting of Shareholders Management Information Circular*. <https://www.gabrielresources.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/GBU-MIC-2023.pdf>
- Gibson-Graham, J. K. (2006). *A Postcapitalist Politics* (NED-New edition). University of Minnesota Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttt07>
- Girdler-Brown, B. V., White, N. W., Ehrlich, R. I., & Churchyard, G. J. (2008). The burden of silicosis, pulmonary tuberculosis and COPD among former Basotho goldminers. *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, 51(9), 640–647. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajim.20602>
- González-Hidalgo, M., Del Bene, D., Iniesta-Arandia, I., & Piñeiro, C. (2022). Emotional healing as part of environmental and climate justice processes: Frameworks and community-based

- experiences in times of environmental suffering. *Political Geography*, 98, 102721.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2022.102721>
- Goțiu, M. (2024a, March 18). *Planeta Verde - Roșia Montană: Ce urmează? E nevoie de PUG pentru a dezvolta zona (Mihai Goțiu)*. RFI. <https://www.rfi.fr/ro/podcasturi/planeta-verde/20240318-ro%C8%99ia-montan%C4%83-ce-urmeaz%C4%83-e-nevoie-de-pug-pentru-a-dezvolta-zona-mihai-go%C8%99Biu>
- Goțiu, M. (2024b, April 18). Firma directorilor de la RMGC și Gabriel Resources a intrat în insolvență. Ce se ascunde în spatele acestei mișcări, în condițiile în care România are de recuperat 10 milioane de dolari după procesul pentru Roșia Montană. *România curată*.  
<https://www.romaniacurata.ro/firma-directorilor-de-la-rmgc-si-gabriel-resources-a-intrat-in-insolventa-ce-se-ascunde-in-spatele-acestei-miscari-in-conditiile-in-care-romania-are-de-recuperat-10-milioane-de-dolari-dupa-procesul/>
- Government of Romania - Department for Infrastructure Projects and Foreign Investment. (2013, August 30). *CONCESSION OF PERIMETERS AND NEGOTIATION OF THE EXPLOITATION CONDITIONS FOR THE MINING PROJECT ROȘIA MONTANĂ*.  
[https://www.izvoznookno.si/Dokumenti/xRosia%20Montana%20-%20prezentare%20proiect-eng%20\\_2\\_.pdf](https://www.izvoznookno.si/Dokumenti/xRosia%20Montana%20-%20prezentare%20proiect-eng%20_2_.pdf)
- Gruber, S. (2020). Personal Trust and System Trust in the Sharing Economy: A Comparison of Community- and Platform-Based Models. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11.  
<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.581299>
- Hajer, M. A., & Pelzer, P. (2018). 2050—An Energetic Odyssey: Understanding ‘Techniques of Futuring’ in the transition towards renewable energy. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 44, 222–231. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2018.01.013>
- Haldane, A., & Choukeir, J. (2022, May 2). *A time to replenish collective imagination | Joseph Rowntree Foundation*. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/imagination-infrastructures/a-time-to-replenish-collective-imagination>
- Hargrave, T. J. (2009). Moral Imagination, Collective Action, and the Achievement of Moral Outcomes. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 19(1), 87–104. <https://doi.org/10.5840/beq20091914>

- Hassan, F. (2020). Cultural heritage, empowerment and the social transformation of local communities. In *Communities and Cultural Heritage*. Routledge.
- Hațegan, O. (2017, July 30). *Exploatarea miniere din Apuseni, scurt istoric al unui dezastru programat. Cum au dispărut întâi minerii, ca să poată dispărea minele!*  
<https://alba24.ro/exploatarile-miniere-din-apuseni-scurt-istoric-al-unui-dezastru-programat-cum-au-disparut-intai-minerii-ca-sa-poata-disparea-minele-586359.html>
- Hemming, P. J. (2018). Faith Schools, Community Engagement and Social Cohesion: A Rural Perspective. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 58(4), 805–824. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soru.12210>
- Herbert, J. (2021). The socio-ecological imagination: Young environmental activists constructing transformation in an era of crisis. *Area*, 53(2), 373–380. <https://doi.org/10.1111/area.12704>
- Hillmann, P. J. (2004). Fostering Creativity, Individualism, and the Imaginative Spirit: Are Collaborative Thinking and Cooperative Learning Overemphasized in Education Today? In *Online Submission*. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED490611>
- Hilson, G., & Monhemius, A. J. (2006). Alternatives to cyanide in the gold mining industry: What prospects for the future? *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 14(12), 1158–1167.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2004.09.005>
- Hitchins, K. (2014). *A Concise History of Romania*. Cambridge University Press.
- Holtorf, C. (2018). Embracing change: How cultural resilience is increased through cultural heritage. *World Archaeology*, 50(4), 639–650. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00438243.2018.1510340>
- Iatan, E.-L. (2021). Chapter 16—Gold mining industry influence on the environment and possible phytoremediation applications. In K. Baudhdh, J. Korstad, & P. Sharma (Eds.), *Phytoremediation of Abandoned Mining and Oil Drilling Sites* (pp. 373–408). Elsevier.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-821200-4.00007-8>
- Ilieș, D. C., Lite, M.-C., Indrie, L., Marcu, F., Moș, C., Ropa, M., Sturzu, B., Costea, M., Albu, A. V., Szabo-Alexi, P., Sambou, A., Herman, G. V., Caciora, T., & Hodor, N. (2021). Research for the conservation of cultural heritage in the context of the circular economy. *Industria Textila*, 72(01), 50–54. <https://doi.org/10.35530/IT.072.01.1807>



- Ilovan, O.-R. (2013). Rosia Montana in Universal History. *Romanian Review of Regional Studies*, 9(2). <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1471055270/citation/9F095F45E3D4B0BPQ/1>
- Institutul Național al Patrimoniului (Director). (2016, December 28). *Rosia Montană în UNESCO* [Video recording]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oElgjSp4F-w>
- Iordachi, C., & Dobrinu, D. (2009). *Transforming Peasants, Property and Power: The Collectivization of Agriculture in Romania, 1949–1962*. Central European University Press.
- Iorio, M., & Corsale, A. (2014). Community-based tourism and networking: Viscri, Romania. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 22(2), 234–255. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2013.802327>
- Jasanoff, S. (2001). Imagine and imagination: The formation of global environmental consciousness. In *Changing the atmosphere: Expert knowledge and environmental governance* (Vol. 309). <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=b8a12e547b01d8c28a7af40b9ba6b445dc982913>
- Jasanoff, S., & Kim, S.-H. (Eds.). (2015). *Dreamscapes of Modernity: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and the Fabrication of Power*. University of Chicago Press. <https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/D/bo20836025.html>
- Jeannotte, M. S. (2010). Singing alone? The contribution of cultural capital to social cohesion and sustainable communities. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 9(1), 35–49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1028663032000089507>
- Jenkins, H. (2004). Corporate social responsibility and the mining industry: Conflicts and constructs. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 11(1), 23–34. <https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.50>
- Jenlink, P. M. (2007). Creating Public Spaces and Practiced Places for Democracy, Discourse, and the Emergence of Civil Society. *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, 20(5), 429–440. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11213-007-9077-1>
- Jovchelovitch, S., & Hawlina, H. (2018). Utopias and World-Making: Time, Transformation and the Collective Imagination. In C. de Saint-Laurent, S. Obradović, & K. R. Carriere (Eds.), *Imagining Collective Futures: Perspectives from Social, Cultural and Political Psychology*

(pp. 129–151). Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-76051-3\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-76051-3_7)

Jurca, S. (2024). Mândri că suntem roșieni! *Ziarul Roșia se ridică*, 6.

Kocsis, T. (Director). (2004, September 30). *New Eldorado* [Documentary]. Budapest Film Rt., Flóra Film International. <https://www.cultureunplugged.com/documentary/watch-online/play/6167/new-eldorado>

Kojola, E. (2020). Divergent memories and visions of the future in conflicts over mining development. *Journal of Political Ecology*, 27(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.2458/v27i1.23210>

Krolak, L. (2005). *The Role of libraries in the creation of literate environments—UNESCO Digital Library*. UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000146057>

Lacko, I. (2014). Imaginative Communities: The Role, Practice and Outreach of Community–Based Theatre. *Ars Aeterna*, 6. <https://doi.org/10.2478/aa-2014-0010>

Lam, L. M., & Paul, S. (2013). Displacement and Erosion of Informal Risk-Sharing: Evidence from Nepal. *World Development*, 43, 42–55. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2012.11.012>

Landzelius, M. (2003). Commemorative Dis(re)membering: Erasing Heritage, Spatializing Disinheritance. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 21(2), 195–221. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d286t>

Lazarević, N. (2024). Inequities in the green transition: Anti-mining protests in the European periphery. *Global Political Economy*, 1(aop), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1332/26352257Y2024D000000023>

Leonte, D. E. (2018). *Damages and dreams from a 20-year-old conflict. The case of Rosia Montana and the struggle for sustainability*.

Levei, E., Senila, M., Miclean, M., Abraham, B., Roman, C., Stefanescu, L., & Moldovan, O. T. (2011). INFLUENCE OF ROSIA POIENI AND ROSIA MONTANA MINING AREAS ON THE WATER QUALITY OF THE ARIES RIVER. *Environmental Engineering and Management Journal*, 10(1), 23–29. <https://doi.org/10.30638/emj.2011.004>

- Leyton-Flor, S. A., & Sangha, K. (2024). The socio-ecological impacts of mining on the well-being of Indigenous Australians: A systematic review. *The Extractive Industries and Society*, *17*, 101429. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2024.101429>
- Lillard, A. S., & Taggart, J. (2019). Pretend Play and Fantasy: What if Montessori Was Right? *Child Development Perspectives*, *13*(2), 85–90. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdep.12314>
- Loewe, M., Zintl, T., & Houdret, A. (2021). The social contract as a tool of analysis: Introduction to the special issue on “Framing the evolution of new social contracts in Middle Eastern and North African countries.” *World Development*, *145*, 104982. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2020.104982>
- Lopata, C., Wallace, N. V., & Finn, K. V. (2005). Comparison of Academic Achievement Between Montessori and Traditional Education Programs. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, *20*(1), 5–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02568540509594546>
- Lopez, M., & Pastor, R. (2015). Development in Rural Areas Through Capacity Building and Education for Business. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *197*, 1882–1888. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.250>
- Made in Rosia Montana. (n.d.-a). *Handmade Merino Wool Knitwear – Made in Rosia Montana*. Retrieved December 14, 2023, from <https://madeinrosiamontana.com/>
- Made in Rosia Montana. (n.d.-b). *Sustenabilitate – Made in Rosia Montana*. Retrieved December 14, 2023, from <https://ro.madeinrosiamontana.com/pages/sustainability>
- Mahoney, J. (2000). Path Dependence in Historical Sociology. *Theory and Society*, *29*(4), 507–548.
- Manea, S. (2013, October 21). *The EU should intervene in the debate over Romania’s controversial Rosia Montana mining project* [Online resource]. LSE European Politics and Policy (EUROPP) Blog; London School of Economics and Political Science. <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/>
- Matiuța, C. (2023). *Social media -a catalyst for civil society movements and a tool for populism. Evidence from Romania*. *Civil Szemle*, 187–203.
- McBride, K. D. (2005). *Collective Dreams: Political Imagination and Community*. Penn State Press.

- Medina, J. (2013). *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and the Social Imagination*. Oxford University Press.
- Melenti, C., & Magyar, I. L. (2011, June 20). *MAPPING HEAVY METAL CONTAMINATION BY KRIGING IN VALEA SESEI TAILING POND, ROMANIA*. 15th International Multidisciplinary Scientific GeoConference SGEM2015.  
<https://doi.org/10.5593/SGEM2015/B21/S8.090>
- Merciu, F.-C., Merciu, G. L., Peptenaru, D., Cercleux, A.-L., Drăghici, C.-C., & Pintilii, R. D. (2012). The Effects of Mining on the Environment in Roșia Montană (Romania). *Europa, Revistă de Literatură, Artă, Cultură Și Tranziție*, 09, 9–14.
- Mikulcak, F., Haider, J. L., Abson, D. J., Newig, J., & Fischer, J. (2015). Applying a capitals approach to understand rural development traps: A case study from post-socialist Romania. *Land Use Policy*, 43, 248–258. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2014.10.024>
- Mikulcak, F., Newig, J., Horcea-Milcu, I., Hartel, T., & Fischer, J. (2013). Integrating rural development and biodiversity conservation in Central Romania. *Environmental Conservation*, 40. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0376892912000392>
- Milkoreit, M. (2017). Imaginary politics: Climate change and making the future. *Elementa: Science of the Anthropocene*, 5, 62. <https://doi.org/10.1525/elementa.249>
- Milu, V., Leroy, J. L., & Peiffert, C. (2002). Water contamination downstream from a copper mine in the Apuseni Mountains, Romania. *Environmental Geology*, 42, 773–782.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s00254-002-0580-5>
- Mokwakwa, N., & Maphosa, F. (2023). The Role of Corporate Social Responsibility in Building Social Cohesion for the Sustainability of Diamond Mining Towns. In S. K. Msosa, S. Mugova, & C. Mlambo (Eds.), *Corporate Social Responsibility in Developing Countries: Challenges in the Extractive Industry* (pp. 123–138). Springer International Publishing.  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27512-8\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27512-8_8)
- Moonesar, I. A., Stephens, M., Batey, M., & Hughes, D. J. (2019). Government Innovation and Creativity: A Case of Dubai. In *Future Governments* (Vol. 7, pp. 135–155). Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S2048-757620190000007007>

- Mucea, B. N., & Marina, L. (2022). The Future of a Mining Locality, the Rosia Montana Case. *Scientific Journal of Cahul State University Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu: Social Sciences*, 2022(2), 7–16.
- Mucea, B.-N. (2022). Mining and Employees in This Sector in Rosia Montana and Abrud Humanities. *Annals of the Constantin Brancusi University of Targu Jiu, Letters and Social Sciences Series*, 2022(1), 89–96.
- Mucea, B.-N., & Marina, L. (2022). VIITORUL UNEI LOCALITĂȚI MINIERE. CAZUL ROȘIA MONTANĂ. *Buletinul Științific al Universității de Stat “Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu” din Cahul: Științe Sociale*, 2, 7–16.
- Mureșan, L. (2011, September 9). *Rosia Montană: Viața după cinci ani fără minerit*. Stiri Bistrita - Ziare Bistrita - Gazeta de Bistrita -Stiri online. <https://gazetadebistrita.ro/rosia-montana-viata-dupa-cinci-ani-fara-minerit/>
- Murzyn-Kupisz, M., & Działek, J. (2013). Cultural heritage in building and enhancing social capital. *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, 3(1), 35–54. <https://doi.org/10.1108/20441261311317392>
- Mutică, P. (2017). TOWARDS AN ACTIVE REUSE OF THE BUILT HERITAGE IN ROȘIA MONTANĂ – A STUDENT’S EXERCISE. *Territorial Identity and Development*, 2(1), 47–63.
- Mutler, A. (2024, February 3). The patriot who helped save Rosia Montana from destruction ★ Universul.net. *Universul.net*. <https://universul.net/the-patriot-who-helped-save-rosia-montana-from-destruction/>
- Naaeke, A., Kurylo, A., Grabowski, M., Linton, D., & Radford, M. L. (2011). *Insider and Outsider Perspective in Ethnographic Research*. 2010.
- Naderifar, M., Goli, H., & Ghaljaie, F. (2017). Snowball Sampling: A Purposeful Method of Sampling in Qualitative Research. *Strides in Development of Medical Education*, 14(3). <https://doi.org/10.5812/sdme.67670>
- Normele metodologice de aplicare a Legii nr. 350/2001 privind amenajarea teritoriului și urbanismul și de elaborare și actualizare a documentațiilor de urbanism din 26.02.2016, Pub. L. No.

- Legea nr. 350/2001, Ordinul nr. 233/2016 (2016).  
<https://lege5.ro/Gratuit/geydcjyg4zq/norme-metodologice-de-aplicare-a-legii-nr-350-2001-privind-amenajarea-teritoriului-si-urbanismul-si-de-elaborare-si-actualizare-a-documentatiilor-de-urbanism-din-26022016?pid=92801301#p-92801301>
- O'Brien, P. (2019). Spatial imaginaries and institutional change in planning: The case of the Mersey Belt in north-west England. *European Planning Studies*, 27(8), 1503–1522.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2019.1588859>
- Ofosu-Mensah, E. A. (n.d.). Historical overview of traditional and modern gold mining in Ghana. *International Research Journal of Library, Information and Archival Studies*, 1(1), 006–022.
- Oldham, O. (2021, August 9). Imagination Infrastructure—What Do We Mean? *Medium*.  
<https://oliviaoldham.medium.com/imagination-infrastructure-abd96262fff6>
- Olteanu, F. (2019). Alburnus Maior/Rosia Montana—A historiographical analysis. *Analele Universitatii din Craiova-Seria Istorie*, 35(1), 129–138.
- Oomen, J., Hoffman, J., & Hajer, M. A. (2022). Techniques of futuring: On how imagined futures become socially performative. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 25(2), 252–270.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431020988826>
- Orazani, S. N., Reynolds, K. J., & Osborne, H. (2023). What works and why in interventions to strengthen social cohesion: A systematic review. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 53(10), 938–995. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jasp.12990>
- Osei-Tutu, P., Pregernig, M., & Pokorny, B. (2015). Interactions between formal and informal institutions in community, private and state forest contexts in Ghana. *Forest Policy and Economics*, 54, 26–35. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forpol.2015.01.006>
- Ouoba, Y. (2017). Economic sustainability of the gold mining industry in Burkina Faso. *Resources Policy*, 51, 194–203. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resourpol.2017.01.001>
- Oxford Dictionary. (2020, April 11). *Social Capital | Definition of Social Capital by Lexico*.  
[https://web.archive.org/web/20200411204827/https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/social\\_capital](https://web.archive.org/web/20200411204827/https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/social_capital)

- Pachamama Association. (n.d.). *Asociația Pachamama – Rosia Montana Marathon | 22 Iunie 2024*. Retrieved December 14, 2023, from <https://www.rosiamontanamarathon.ro/asociația-pachamama/>
- Papcunová, V., Urbaníková, M., Hlinku, T. A., & Dvořák, M. (2017). *Public libraries as part of the creative economy*.
- Parasca, A. G., & Butnaru, G. I. (2014). Roșia Montana – Regional Impact. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 15, 679–686. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671\(14\)00539-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671(14)00539-5)
- Pascaru, M. (2013). Romanian Glocalization. Case Study on the Rosia Montana Gold Corporation Mining Project. *Revista de Cercetare Și Intervenție Socială*, 43, 39–48.
- Pascu, Ștefan. (1984). *Revoluția populară de sub conducerea lui Horea*. Editura Militară.
- Patalano, R. (2007). Imagination and society. The affective side of institutions. *Constitutional Political Economy*, 18(4), 223–241. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10602-007-9019-z>
- Pelehatăi, I., & Dulămiță, I. (2018, July 13). *Lupta pentru Roșia Montană: O cronologie și cinci oameni*. <https://www.scena9.ro/article/18-ani-de-salvat-rosia-montana>
- Perley, B. C. (2020). Indigenous Translocality: Emergent Cosmogonies in the New World Order. *Theory & Event*, 23(4), 977–1003.
- Petrova, S., & Marinova, D. (2013). Social impacts of mining: Changes within the local social landscape. *Rural Society*, 22(2), 153–165. <https://doi.org/10.5172/rsj.2013.22.2.153>
- Pița, D., & Veroiu, M. (Directors). (1974a, August 22). *Nunta de piatra* [Drama]. Filmstudio București.
- Pița, D., & Veroiu, M. (Directors). (1974b, October 28). *Duhul aurului* [Drama].
- Pop, V. A. (2008). Is it Red or Green? The construction of social realities through photographs; the physical environment and community of Roșia Montană. *Sociologie Românească*, 6(03–04), 101–115.
- Pop, V. A. (2013). Campaigning to “Save Roșia Montană”: The Role of the “Formula As” Magazine. *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Brașov, Series VII: Social Sciences and Law*, 2, 235–246.

- Quartz Film (Director). (2004). *Rosia Montana—Pretul aurului—Film documentar 2004* [Video recording]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XICf-PCGRJM>
- Radio România Cultural (Director). (2024, July 18). STREAM, festivalul de știință pentru copii de la Eindhoven, ”primul festival din diaspora care îmbină știința și limba maternă” [Radio Show Episode]. In *Idei in nocturnă – Diaspora*. <https://www.radioromaniacultural.ro/emisiuni/idei-in-nocturna-diaspora/stream-festivalul-de-stiinta-pentru-copii-de-la-eindhoven-primul-festival-din-diaspora-care-imbina-stiinta-si-limba-materna-id44614.html>
- Redacția Alba24.ro. (2022, October 25). *Roșia Montană, fără PUG și fără plan de management, la un an de la includerea în patrimoniul UNESCO. Ce așteaptă autoritățile*. <https://alba24.ro/rosia-montana-fara-pug-si-fara-plan-de-management-la-un-an-de-la-includerea-in-patrimoniul-unesco-ce-asteapta-autoritatile-947733.html>
- Rîșteiu, N. T., Crețan, R., & O’Brien, T. (2022). Contesting post-communist economic development: Gold extraction, local community, and rural decline in Romania. *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 63(4), 491–513. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2021.1913205>
- RMGC. (n.d.). *About us* [Corporate Website]. Retrieved March 2, 2024, from <https://www.rmgc.ro/rmgc/despre-rosia-montana-gold-corporation.html>
- RMGC. (2007a). *Roșia Montană Project—Form for the submittal of the answers to the issues raised by the public resulting from the public consultation on the Project’s Environmental Impact Assessment study report (Volume 53)* (Volume 53). RMGC. [https://en.rmgc.ro/Content/uploads/eia-en/53\\_en.pdf](https://en.rmgc.ro/Content/uploads/eia-en/53_en.pdf)
- RMGC. (2007b). *Roșia Montană Project—Form for the submittal of the answers to the issues raised by the public resulting from the public consultation on the Project’s Environmental Impact Assessment study report (Volume 90)*. [https://en.rmgc.ro/Content/uploads/eia-en/90\\_en.pdf](https://en.rmgc.ro/Content/uploads/eia-en/90_en.pdf)
- RMGC. (2015). *Project history*. <https://en.rmgc.ro/rosia-montana-project/project-history.html>
- Robinson, C. (Director). (2022, May 10). *Imagination Infrastructuring* [Video recording]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RNnOQ5xK1o>
- Robinson, C. (2023a, January 2). *If a community builds its “imagination infrastructure”, asks Cassie Robinson, what materials does it need? And what ambitions does it raise?* THE



- ALTERNATIVE. <https://www.thealternative.org.uk/dailyalternative/2023/1/8/imagination-infrastructure-cassie-robinson>
- Robinson, C. (2023b, January 7). Imagination Infrastructures at Anticipation Conference. *Medium*. <https://cassierobinson.medium.com/imagination-infrastructures-at-anticipation-conference-ad0e1837d48b>
- Roth, S. D. (2024, March 27). *Roşia Montana: Victory of solidarity over greed* (V. Mitev, Interviewer) [Interview]. <https://friendshipbridge.eu/2024/03/27/rosia-montana-victory-solidarity-over-greed/>
- Roth, S. D. (2024, May 3). *Interview with Stephanie Roth* (E. Vrînceanu, Interviewer) [Personal communication].
- Roth, S. D. (2024, June 29). *Interview with Stephanie Roth* (E. Vrînceanu, Interviewer) [Personal communication].
- Roth, S. D., & Maier, J. (2016, November 28). *Silence is Golden*. Forum Umwelt und Entwicklung. [https://www.forumue.de/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Maier-Roth\\_Rosia-Montana.pdf](https://www.forumue.de/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Maier-Roth_Rosia-Montana.pdf)
- Rus, V. (2021). *Micii producători de aur de la Roşia Montană*. Vertical Geographic.
- Samuel, L. R. (2012). *The American Dream: A Cultural History*. Syracuse University Press.
- Sanghera, G. S., & Thapar-Björkert, S. (2012). THE IMAGINATION AND SOCIAL CAPITAL: Transnational agency and practices among Pakistani Muslims in the UK. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 2(2), 141–149.
- Sarabi, S., Frantzeskaki, N., Waldenberger, J., Alvarado, O., Raaimakers, D., Runhaar, H., Stijnen, C., Toxopeus, H., & Vrînceanu, E. (2023). Renaturing cities: From utopias to contested realities and futures. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, 86, 127999. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ufug.2023.127999>
- Saukani, N., & Ismail, N. A. (2019). Identifying the Components of Social Capital by Categorical Principal Component Analysis (CATPCA). *Social Indicators Research*, 141(2), 631–655. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-018-1842-2>
- S.C. Roşia Montană Gold Corporation S.A. (2006, May 17). *Report on Environmental Impact Assessment Study*. <https://www.gabrielresources.com/documents/EIA/Chapter%201/C1.pdf>

- Schiefer, D., & van der Noll, J. (2017). The Essentials of Social Cohesion: A Literature Review. *Social Indicators Research*, 132(2), 579–603. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-016-1314-5>
- Schmidt, S., Brinks, V., & Brinkhoff, S. (2014). Innovation and creativity labs in Berlin: Organizing temporary spatial configurations for innovations. *Zeitschrift für Wirtschaftsgeographie*, 58(1), 232–247. <https://doi.org/10.1515/zfw.2014.0016>
- Sevastre, L. (2017). Enchanted place, shifting landscapes An anthropological study on the tangled transformations within Roşia Montană's place and landscape MASTER THESIS. *University of Bergen*.  
[https://www.academia.edu/45623601/Enchanted\\_place\\_shifting\\_landscapes\\_An\\_anthropological\\_study\\_on\\_the\\_tangled\\_transformations\\_within\\_Ro%C8%99ia\\_Montan%C4%83s\\_place\\_and\\_landscape\\_MASTER\\_THESIS](https://www.academia.edu/45623601/Enchanted_place_shifting_landscapes_An_anthropological_study_on_the_tangled_transformations_within_Ro%C8%99ia_Montan%C4%83s_place_and_landscape_MASTER_THESIS)
- Shahen, M. E., Kotani, K., & Saijo, T. (2021). Intergenerational sustainability is enhanced by taking the perspective of future generations. *Scientific Reports*, 11(1), 2437. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-81835-y>
- Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Otago University Press.
- Soare, S., & Tufiş, C. D. (2021). 'Roşia Montană, the revolution of our generation': From environmental to total activism. *European Politics and Society*, 22(2), 259–276. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23745118.2020.1729052>
- Souca, M. L. (2019). Revitalizing Rural Tourism through Creative Tourism: The Role and Importance of the Local Community. *Marketing – from Information to Decision Journal*, 2(2), 43–50. <https://doi.org/10.2478/midj-2019-0009>
- Soundy, C. S. (2009). Young Children's Imaginative Play: Is It Valued in Montessori Classrooms? *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 36(5), 381–383. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-008-0282-z>
- Špirić, J. (2018). Ecological distribution conflicts and sustainability: Lessons from the post-socialist European semi-periphery. *Sustainability Science*, 13(3), 661–676. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-017-0505-6>

- Stacey, T. (2019, October 27). *How myth, ritual and magic sustain social movements like XR*. openDemocracy. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/transformation/how-myth-ritual-and-magic-sustain-social-movements-xr/>
- Stanculescu, M. L. (2012). *FROM A MINING VILLAGE TO AN ENCLAVE-LIKE CITY NEIGHBORHOOD: CASE STUDY OF A DEVELOPMENT INDUCED VOLUNTARY RESETTLEMENT* [Master Thesis]. <https://studenttheses.uu.nl/handle/20.500.12932/21110>
- Ștefănescu, L., & Alexandrescu, F. (2020). Environmental protection or subversion in mining? Planning challenges, perspectives and actors at the largest gold deposit in Europe. *Land Use Policy*, *95*, 103649. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2018.10.011>
- Stephan, U., Uhlaner, L. M., & Stride, C. (2015). Institutions and social entrepreneurship: The role of institutional voids, institutional support, and institutional configurations. *Journal of International Business Studies*, *46*(3), 308–331. <https://doi.org/10.1057/jibs.2014.38>
- Stoian Connor, G. (2017). *Rural Systematization: A Radical Campaign of Rural Planning under Ceausescu Regime in Romania*. *8*(2).
- Stokowski, P. A., Kuentzel, W. F., Derrien, M. M., & Jakobcic, Y. L. (2021). Social, cultural and spatial imaginaries in rural tourism transitions. *Journal of Rural Studies*, *87*, 243–253. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2021.09.011>
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. M. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques* (p. 270). Sage Publications, Inc.
- SystExt. (n.d.). *The dark side of Rosia Poieni, Europe's second largest copper mine | ISF SystExt*. Retrieved February 27, 2024, from <https://www.systext.org/node/697>
- Tangenberg, E. (2019). *Resource History Matters: Resource System Path Dependence in the Anthropocene*. <https://hdl.handle.net/10535/10444>
- TEDx Talks, & TEDxCluj (Directors). (2019, September 18). *Despre curajul de a protesta și de a tricota | Darie Tică | TEDxCluj* [Video recording]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwTe6KcxRng>
- The Council of Europe Faro Convention (with Pla, F., & Poznan, J.). (2022). *The Faro Convention at work in Europe: Selected examples*. Council of Europe Publishing.

- The World Bank. (2007, June 29). *Romania—Mine closure and social mitigation project*. The World Bank. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/791121468295193557/pdf/ICR495.pdf>
- Țiganea, O. C., & Vigotti, F. (2022). The Shift in Paradigm of the (Post)Mining Landscapes, Between Risks and Recognitions. *Restauro Archeologico*, 30(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.36253/rar-14283>
- Țimonea, D. (2015, May 27). *Secretele Masivului Cetate din Roșia Montană, locul unde peste 2000 de ani s-a sfredelit pământul în căutarea aurului*. <https://adevarul.ro/stiri-locale/alba-iulia/secretele-masivului-cetate-din-rosia-montana-1626152.html>
- Țimonea, D. (2024, May 29). *Firma directorilor de la Roșia Montană Gold Corporation, în insolvență, cu datorii de 19 milioane de euro. Gabriel Resources, CEC Bank și Primăria Alba Iulia, pe lista creditorilor*. Libertatea. <https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/firma-directorilor-de-la-rosia-montana-gold-corporation-in-insolventa-cu-datorii-de-19-milioane-de-euro-gabriel-resources-cec-bank-si-primaria-alba-iulia-pe-lista-creditorilor-4900588>
- Travel Guide Romania. (2020, January 22). Țara Moților—Inima Munților Apuseni situată pe râul Arieș. *Travelguideromania*. <https://www.travelguideromania.com/ro/tara-motilor-inima-muntilor-apuseni/>
- Turism în Roșia Montană. (n.d.). *Dragi iubitori de alergare sau mișcare în... - Rosia Montana Marathon | Facebook*. Retrieved December 14, 2023, from <https://www.facebook.com/RosiaMontanaMarathon/posts/pfbid0kFwHpRJ4Gza8SHbTKJ8ERENEE9LgctheWbjiFASC6mXqBSZkRnjr89CVFBp3zBjbl>
- Udoudom, M. (2021). The Value of Nature: Utilitarian Perspective. *GNOSI: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Human Theory and Praxis*, 4(1(May)), Article 1(May).
- UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (2018). *Roșia Montană Mining Landscape: UNESCO Executive Summary*. UNESCO World Heritage Centre. <http://rosiamontana.world/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Rosia-Montana-Executive-Summary.pdf>
- Uslaner, E. M. (2016). Disasters, Trust, and Social Cohesion. *Ritsumeikan Language Culture Study*, 28(2).

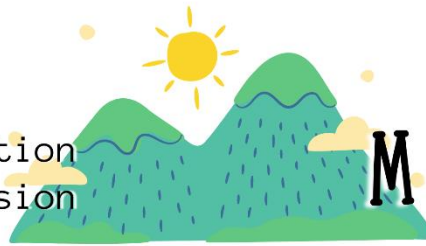
- Vannebo, B. I., & Ljunggren, E. B. (2021). Bridging or Bonding: An Organizational Framework for Studying Social Capital in Kindergartens. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(5), 2663. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18052663>
- Varvarousis, A. (2019). Crisis, liminality and the decolonization of the social imaginary. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, 2(3), 493–512. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2514848619841809>
- Vela-Almeida, D., Kolinjivadi, V., & Kosoy, N. (2018). The building of mining discourses and the politics of scale in Ecuador. *World Development*, 103, 188–198. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2017.10.025>
- Velicu, I. (2012). To Sell or Not to Sell: Landscapes of Resistance to Neoliberal Globalization in Transylvania. *Globalizations*, 9(2), 307–321. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2012.658253>
- Velicu, I. (2014). Moral versus Commercial Economies: Transylvanian Stories. *New Political Science*, 36(2), 219–237. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07393148.2014.883804>
- Velicu, I. (2015). Demonizing the Sensible and the ‘Revolution of Our Generation’ in Rosia Montana. *Globalizations*, 12(6), 846–858. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2015.1100858>
- Velicu, I. (2016). Rosia Montana’s movement for democratic justice. *Undisciplined Environments*. <https://undisciplinedenvironments.org/2016/09/13/rosia-montanas-movement-for-democratic-justice/>
- Velicu, I. (2019). De-growing environmental justice: Reflections from anti-mining movements in Eastern Europe. *Ecological Economics*, 159, 271–278. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2019.01.021>
- Velicu, I., & Kaika, M. (2017). Undoing environmental justice: Re-imagining equality in the Rosia Montana anti-mining movement. *Geoforum*, 84, 305–315. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2015.10.012>
- Velicu, I., & OGREZeanu, A. (2022). Quiet no more: The emergence of food justice and sovereignty in Romania. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 89, 122–129. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2021.11.024>

- Verschuren, P., & Doorewaard, H. (2010). *Designing a Research Project*. Eleven International Publishing.
- Vervoort, J. (2023, November 2). *Imagination infrastructuring for better urban future—Transforming Cities debate*.
- Vesalon, L., & Crețan, R. (2012). DEVELOPMENT-INDUCED DISPLACEMENT IN ROMANIA: THE CASE OF ROȘIA MONTANĂ MINING PROJECT. *Journal of Urban and Regional Analysis*, 4(1), 63–75.
- Vizitați Roșia Montană. (2014, April 4). Pușcatul de Paști la Roșia Montană. *Vizitați Roșia Montană!* <https://vizitatirosiamontana.wordpress.com/2014/04/04/puscatul-de-pasti-la-rosia-montana-2/>
- Voivozeanu, A. (2020). “I wanted to see how to make money there too”: Mobility strategies of Romanian seasonal workers in the agricultural sector abroad. *Social Change Review*, 18(Winter), 13–38.
- Waller, P. (2020). *Nightmare of the Imaginaries: A Critique of Socio-technical Imaginaries Commonly Applied to Governance* (SSRN Scholarly Paper 3605494). <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3605494>
- Wanner, P. (2017). *Places without People: The Stories left behind: Faro Convention approach and Rural Settlements Concluding memorandum. Faro Convention*. <https://rm.coe.int/council-of-europe-framework-convention-on-the-value-of-cultural-herita/1680740671>
- Weiss, E. B. (1992). In Fairness to Future Generations and Sustainable Development Conference on Human Rights, Public Finance, and the Development Process. *American University Journal of International Law and Policy*, 8(1), 19–26.
- Weissenbacher, R. (2019). *The Core-Periphery Divide in the European Union: A Dependency Perspective*. Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28211-0>
- Winkler, A. (n.d.). *Before the French Revolution: Horea and the Romanian Peasants' Revolt of 1784*. Die Welt Der Habsburger. Retrieved February 27, 2024, from <https://www.habsburger.net/en/chapter/french-revolution-horea-and-romanian-peasants-revolt-1784>

Zittoun, T., & Gillespie, A. (2018). *Imagining the Collective Future: A Sociocultural Perspective* (pp. 15–37). [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-76051-3\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-76051-3_2)

# Beyond Mining

Collective Imagination  
and Community Cohesion



# in ROSIA MONTANA



Unique Gold  
Mining Heritage



Threat:  
Industrial Mining



The Community  
fell apart



Now: Healing and  
Development

My research looks at how the unique gold mining village of Rosia Montana has been affected by an industrial mining project and how that changed the way villagers imagine their future and work together nowadays.



**Imagination Infrastructuring** is about creating and supporting ideas and plans that help a community imagine and build a better future together.

**Collective Imagination**  
...is about how the people think about their future and what they want their community to be like. It looks at how their ideas and dreams have changed over time because of important events and challenges, and how these ideas help them stay connected and achieve goals together.

**Social Cohesion**  
...shows how well people in a community get along, trust each other, and work together. It's about feeling connected and supporting each other to make the community a better place.

**RMGC's fault**  
The mining company caused people in the community to disagree and argue a lot. They bought people's homes and land, which made some people leave and others stay, creating groups that didn't trust each other. This made it hard for everyone to get along and work together like they used to.

**Imagination Deinfrastructuring**  
I proposed this new concept as the intentional process of someone breaking down the ideas and dreams that help a community stay strong and connected. What RMGC did is precisely this. Sadly, this also happens in other areas, especially in cases of environmental conflicts.

**NGOs**  
...are helping the community heal by fixing up old buildings, organizing events, and supporting local businesses. They bring people together to work on projects that make the village a better place to live, helping everyone feel more connected and hopeful about the future.

**Sustainable Development**  
Instead of mining for gold, they want to create jobs through eco-friendly tourism, opening museums and hosting festivals, so they can make money without harming the environment. This way, they can keep their village beautiful and healthy for future generations.