



## Misunderstanding opportunities: (post-)resettlement issues in the Recea neighbourhood of Alba Iulia

Cătălin Buzoianu<sup>1</sup> and Sebastian Țoc<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

*Although its gold mining project has been locked in public debates and permit reviews for over a decade, a Canadian-Romanian company privately negotiated with the inhabitants of Roșia Montană commune, Romania, to buy their households and lands, and resettle them in a specially built neighbourhood in the city of Alba Iulia. This paper suggests that while the paternalistic character of resettlement has allowed resettlers to partially keep their group identity, and partially to reconstruct it in relation with the host community, it was also based on a misunderstanding of the relationship between resettlers and the organiser of resettlement. Drawing on field research, the resettlement was studied as a “continuous process” spanning three years (2010-12), during which this paper identifies (1) the changes in lifestyle, (2) the mechanisms of community regeneration, and (3) post-resettlement initiatives of resettlers. Although greater living costs (utility bills, real estate taxes, transportation) and unemployment seem to be balanced by better living conditions and greater educational opportunities for their children, the ambivalent paternalistic aspect of the resettlement has negatively influenced the development of the new community. While at first community issues were unsuccessfully addressed to the company, recent public improvement initiatives by resettlers have caused tensions between the two sides.*

### Keywords

*Resettlement, reconstruction, post-resettlement initiatives, resettlement as opportunity*

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary, [catalin.buzoianu@yahoo.com](mailto:catalin.buzoianu@yahoo.com)

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Political Sciences, National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest, Romania, [sebastiantoc@yahoo.com](mailto:sebastiantoc@yahoo.com)

## Introduction

According to data from the World Bank, in the 1990s, each year 10 million people around the world were relocated due to development projects not counting war refugees and victims of natural disasters (Serageldin, 1995 and Cernea, 1997)<sup>3</sup>.

Considering the large media attention to the Roșia Montană mining project and the numerous public debates that followed, scholars from across the spectrum of political and social sciences as well as journalists and ordinary people are taking an active interest in its unfolding. In issues that fundamentally affect the lives of people in a community the need for a comprehensive level of knowledge of the resettlers' point of view is imperative. Therefore, this study positions itself as a "public sociology" (Burawoy, 2005) endeavour in the issue of resettlement, in which the social realities studied in the field and their scientific analysis can and should actively take part in the democratic dialogue between invested parties. Concretely, in order to learn how the alternative understandings of the opportunities offered by the resettlement process came into contact/clashed we aimed to track the experiences of the people living the project risk area, beginning with the moment they left Roșia Montană<sup>4</sup> commune to settle in a specially built neighbourhood by Roșia Montană Gold Corporation<sup>5</sup>, the investor company.

Furthermore, the issue of separate understandings and perceptions of the same situation moves to the forefront in the context of a community in a process of social change in the guise of a "resettlement process" initiated and organized solely by a single actor, RMGC, in the absence of a governmentally and/or publicly accepted planned resettlement project.

The area of the Roșia Montană commune, located 65 km from the municipality of Alba Iulia, Alba County, has been mined for gold intermittently over a period of at least 2,000 years until the state-owned mines were closed during the 1990s economic reforms, which left the vast majority of people with no employment alternatives in a mono-industrial community. Apart from the closing down of mines, the restructuring of the Romanian mining sector largely depended on the Government's efforts to attract foreign investments.

When Gabriel Resources Ltd., a "Canadian TSX-listed resource company"<sup>6</sup>, founded RMGC in 1999 and expressed interest in initiating a surface gold-mining project in the area of the RM commune, controversies ignited both among locals, environmental NGOs and state officials. While RMGC emphasised the macroeconomic advantages of the project such as creation of jobs and an estimated \$19 billion in tax revenues over its

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<sup>4</sup> From here on referred to as RM.

<sup>5</sup> Referred to as RMGC, from this point forward.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.gabrielresources.com/site/corporate.aspx>

estimated 16-year extraction cycle (Dunlop, 2012), NGOs such as the local Alburnus Maior Association stressed the environmental side effects of cyanide mining. The open environment cyanide processing of the gold ore involves using 50-80 mg of cyanide per litre of water, and the residual substances would be gathered in a 600ha tailing pond, with a 250 million tonnes volume capacity and a 180 m high tailing dam, in close vicinity of Abrud city, on the site of Corna village (Bara, 2002). According to international NGOs and action groups such as CEE Bankwatch Network, the high expenditures of running the proposed cyanide neutralisation station and water recycling plant makes their functioning highly questionable and the chances of an ecological disaster high.

Amidst public opinion pressure and state officials' indecisiveness, the compulsory environmental impact assessment (EIA) review process was suspended in September 2007 by the Ministry of Environment due to an invalid urbanism certificate required for the EIA. The certificate was annulled by the Cluj Tribunal in July 2007 after having been challenged legally by opposing NGOs (Alexandrescu, 2012). In September 2010 RMGC obtained a new urbanism certificate and recommenced the EIA review process, which as of May 2013 is ongoing.

Throughout this period debates, arguments and complaints ignited among the general population in the region, and, in some case, neighbours and whole families stopped speaking to one another. A visible consequence of these arguments we observed in the field was that the inhabitants of RM identified themselves only in terms of being pro or counter the mining project. Taking into account that the planned gold-mining area contained peoples' houses in its perimeter, RMGC decided early on to start the resettlement process with the inhabitants' consent, gained through direct and private negotiations. In these circumstances the relocation to Recea was done gradually, and the resettlers come mainly from two villages in the RM commune, Roșia Montană, which gives the commune its name, and Corna. According to official data supplied by RMGC, the demographic structure of the population living in Recea is made up of 223 inhabitants, of whom 80 persons are active, 84 are pensioners, 56 preschoolers, pupils and students, and 3 inactive (household workers), the biggest community created by the resettlement process, numbering 125 houses, of which only 110 are presently lived in.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, such a research could be useful in discovering and underscoring the socio-cultural characteristics necessary to be taken into account for future such projects, an essential starting point for preventing or diminishing potentially unwanted consequences for resettlers<sup>8</sup>.

Taking these into consideration, our main research question was "How are locals from Roșia Montană coping with the process of resettlement?", and our main research objectives were: (1) the identification of changes which appeared in the lives of people after resettlement, (2) the identification of the mechanisms through which the resettled community rebuilds itself, and (3) post-resettlement initiatives.

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<sup>7</sup> According to official data obtained from RMGC.

<sup>8</sup> For example, the World Bank started taking an interest in this kind of process since an important part of the development projects it was financing involved the loss of housing, lands and/or jobs in the wake of infrastructure projects such as highways or resource mining projects such as hydroelectric dam building.

The field research in the Recea neighbourhood of Alba Iulia was carried out in three different stages, each a year apart: 1) April and August 2010, in Recea and, respectively, Roşia Montană; 2) May 2011 (Recea), and 3) April 2012 (Recea). We conducted 30 semi-structured interviews, 10 in each stage, along with observations on living conditions and social relations, and interlocutors were chosen according to their personal experience and their key position in the social network of the community. Our discussions were focused on issues such as adjustment to urban life, employment, relations with the people back in Roşia Montană, relations with the host community (Alba Iulia) etc. Moreover, we tried to establish connections with our interlocutors for return visits in subsequent years in order to track adjustments to their new life and, more generally, to get a better idea of the new community.

The semi-structured interviews were complemented by 24 questionnaires, based on a purposive sampling model (Babbie, 2007: p. 184) and on prior knowledge of the community gained in the exploratory phase. These questionnaires helped, on the one hand, to confirm data collected through the semi-structured interviews and, on the other hand, to serve as a sounding board for them, but are not representative for the entire population. Even in the case of outright refusals to questionnaires, we tried to carry out informal discussions with people, which helped further our picture of the neighbourhood, and especially the daily problems people were faced with.

Additional socio-demographic data were obtained from the official guide to the Recea neighbourhood produced by RMGC<sup>9</sup>, and the company's on site special information and monitoring work point.

In the following, we will try to present and discuss the particulars of the RM resettlement project. In order to do so, the paper is divided in three main parts: (1) the social context of resettlement, in which we offer a brief historical background of the community and the project itself, (2) the analysis itself, in which we apply the impoverishment risks and reconstruction model devised by Michael Cernea and modified by Filip Alexandrescu, and (3) post-resettlement initiatives, in which we analyze resettlers' activities following their relocation to the Recea neighbourhood, in the city of Alba Iulia. Conclusions follow.

### **The conditions of resettlement**

The first major concerns regarding the social impact of resettlement projects on displaced populations can be traced to the famous Kariba Dam development project in the 1950s. Built on the Zambezi River, the dam brought about the involuntary resettlement of 57000 people within the reservoir basin and the area immediately downstream. Due to the environmental degradation suffered by the flood recession agriculture and the reduction of the size and biodiversity of the Zambezi delta, the displaced people were left impoverished (Scudder, 2005).

Owing to the enormous increase of resettled population on a global scale, policies with viable solutions must be drawn up to countermand perhaps the greatest risk facing

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<sup>9</sup> Available online at [http://www.prandmore.ro/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/ghid\\_la\\_recea\\_oficialitati.pdf](http://www.prandmore.ro/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/ghid_la_recea_oficialitati.pdf)

resettlers: impoverishment. Cernea (2005: p. 5) suggests that we consider the risks of impoverishment as being inherent in the process of resettlement, the idea being to identify and manage the risks the displaced population is presented with in order to "...minimize, or even prevent, social and economic losses".

A resettlement "operation" consists, in fact, of three distinct processes: (a) Expropriation and dispossession (the economic component); (b) Transfer from the departure site to the relocation site (the physical component) (c) Reconstruction and improvement of resettlers' livelihoods, and their integration into the new social context (the social component). Although a great deal of research has been done on risk management in natural disaster and emergency situations, and even on the management of war refugees, the author suggests that the big problem confronting experts is the denial of social risks in development practice by the project leaders themselves (p. 5). The author views this widespread type of attitude as a "patterned behaviour" of "deliberate information manipulation and withholding" (idem) in resettlement projects. In the case of project preparation documents (reports, diagnoses or plans), the usual types of risks put forward are linked to technical operations, civil works, currency exchange affairs, monetary risks for investors etc., and not social risks to the local population being displaced (idem). In other words, risks are rarely expressed as such or linked to their potential impact on resettlers, but frequently hushed-up and minimized.

One possible answer to this problem is The Impoverishment Risks and Reconstruction Model (IRR), first proposed by Michael Cernea. It was developed by combining an analysis of the extant case-studies in the specialty literature with empirical data collected by the author, and can be used either to study a particular resettlement project or to compare different resettlement projects. The interior logic of the model can be put in four objectives (Cernea, 1997: pp. 1571-1576): (1) To place a diagnosis which carries out an explicative function, and a cognitive function; (2) To predict undesirable effects of resettlement, to warn against them, and, more importantly, to help plan against them; (3) To create a resolution of the problem in order to guide and measure the rehabilitation of the resettlers; (4) To perform research to permit the formulation of hypotheses and the field application of theories. Based on empirical data supplied by sociologists, anthropologists and geographers, the basic poverty risks identified in the IRR model are: landlessness; joblessness; homelessness; marginalization; food insecurity; increased morbidity; education loss; loss of access to common property resources; and social disarticulation (Cernea, 2003: p. 25).

For the particular case of RM, Filip Alexandrescu's (2011) analysis suggests modifications to Michael Cernea's IRR model so as to take into account both macro- and micro-social contexts take can have or have had a bearing in the resettlement project. The main emphasis is placed on "the links between extralocal processes and their subjective interpretation" (p. 80). To better assess the risk of impoverishment in the Roșia Montană case, a process understood by the author as more complex and more uncertain than the "Third World" examples mentioned above, the term "vulnerability", borrowed from Allen (2003), is used in order to refer to "the relative inability of an individual or group to deal with the adverse effects stemming from environmental or

technological change” (p. 82). It refers to the possibility that a crisis may descend upon the displaced population at any time, and the insecurity felt by the individual that comes with it.

Alexandrescu identifies two macro processes as the causes of vulnerability: peripheralization and individualization. Peripheralization means that the developmental path of a local community comes under the “ever-stronger influence of extra-local forces” (p. 83). Communities in this situation experience “contradictory pressures”: increasing dependence on extra-local investments or markets coupled with depopulation and further depletion of resources (p. 83).

The argument concerning RM as periphery is complex, but first of all it factors in the political economy of the global extractive industry. From a spatial point of view, the pressure of crowding of living space by mining industry usage of environment as supply depot and waste repository for large-scale operations on inhabited territory, and, from a financial point of view, “... operations are owned by foreigners so that profits are largely repatriated to outside investors” (Alexandrescu 2011: 84).

Second of all, it takes into account the transition context of post-socialist Romania. This refers to the control of the gold resources by the State, and the subsequent efforts to attract foreign investors in the midst of privatization and economic collapse. Other dimensions are the price of land, which has steadily risen in recent years, and the cost living, which has likewise known an increase in costs (p.86).

Third of all, the involvement of influential transnational NGOs is studied. Alexandrescu notes how transnational NGOs (Greenpeace, Mining Watch, Bank Watch) represent the growing power of extralocal actors to define local risks and uncertainties and the consequences of resettlement. It should be pointed out, however, that the author conducted interviews across 2007 and the spring of 2008, therefore just before Recea received its first residents, with people either still living in the project-affected area and the localities in close proximity to it or with people who independently relocated to Alba Iulia, Abrud or Câmpeni.

Apart from Alexandrescu’s suggestions on the particularities of the RM resettlement, we must consider the importance of RMGC as initiator of the relocation of RM residents with houses in the projected gold-mining area perimeter at a time when the project itself was (and still is) in a decade-long state of limbo. Along with the active role the company took in catering to whatever needs and whims were imaginable on the part of resettlers, this constitutes an extraordinary instance of resettlement. The neighbourhood itself was built from scratch, on a surface of 24 hectares, and its inhabitants benefit from a modern infrastructure which includes running water, a natural gas supply line, electricity network, and sewage system, all of which are constructed underground<sup>10</sup>.

Based on the location of the houses and lands owned by inhabitants, whether they were in the project risk area or not, and the value of the property, the company

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<sup>10</sup> Besides these, there are no cables or wires that can be seen above the houses, as can be frequently observed in Romania, this being one of the details put forth by residents, in virtually all of our discussions.

offered through direct and private negotiations to buy their property and people were presented with three options to choose from: take the money and resettle in houses built by the company somewhere near RM commune, in order to benefit from the work opportunities which would arise at the start of the project, relocate independently where they wished, or relocate along with other locals in a specially built neighbourhood, in Alba Iulia. The majority of people opted for the latter, and, considering that the houses near RM weren't built at the time of the resettlement deadline, whoever chose that option eventually moved in along with the first residents of Recea, at the end of 2008. A part of the people who accepted RMGC's deal, though, already had jobs and living conditions in Abrud, a town near RM, and decided to stay there, and sold the house in Recea.

Furthermore, the company permitted resettlers to remain in their old homes in RM, and left them to decide for themselves when to leave, and even supplied them with means of transporting their belongings, including furniture, family gravesites and, in some cases, saplings and poultry, free of charge. Therefore, the move to Recea started slowly with a few families at the end of 2008, and proceeded up until the winter of 2011. Concerning those who remained, at the time of our last visit to the field, in the spring of 2012, approximately 20% of the population of RM was still living in the project risk area either due to emotional bonds to the community or due to failure in reaching a financial agreement with RMGC.

These are people who were either born or married into life in RM, having their homes in the mining projects' risk area. Everyone knows everyone in the neighbourhood, and people have hold on to the everyday practices common to rural areas of greeting one another on the street, talking in front of the gate, visiting each other etc. The houses in Recea weren't for free but were cheaply bought by residents with money they received for selling their property in RM, and all of them had enough money left over to make further investments such as acquiring a second house, and automobiles. Resettlers had the possibility of choosing either to buy one of the five pre-designed models of house already built in Recea or to buy a partially unfinished house and complete the design themselves, as they wished. The latter continued living in RM during the completion of their new houses, commuting as necessary to Alba Iulia.

Additionally, it is important to mention that people didn't know beforehand exactly where they would move to or who their neighbours would be. Preliminary consultations between the population and the company were held, encouraging people to opt for resettlement, and trips to the site of the future neighbourhood were organized so that the potential resettlers could get an idea of how it would look like. Of course, not everybody participated, but those who did go managed, it seems, to decisively convince others about the merits of relocating to Recea. Additionally, the company offered families who relocated legal counsel, occupational consultation, assistance in professional reconversion, and help with the necessary paperwork for utilities, enlistment of children to kindergarten, renewal of personal identity documents, transfer of pension documents, and enlistment to a family medic. Apart from all this, a Bureau of Information, Orientation, Counselling and Support in the Resettlement Process

was opened by RMGC at the edge of the neighbourhood for people to receive information or to get help in solving whatever problems they may be faced with.

### **The price of resettlement**

One of the central questions we asked interlocutors referred to the way in which they perceived the resettlement process. The forced character of resettlement is implied in its definition, but in this case the resettlers themselves decided to move through the deal they made with the company. The people who stayed in RM either did so because they didn't reach a satisfactory agreement with RMGC about the amount of money they would receive for their property or because they were against the mining project itself. What kind of phenomenon do we have here? Although the resettlement process was reported as voluntary by the locals, in fact the dominant perception of our interlocutors was that sooner or later the mining would commence and therefore there was no reason to postpone the inevitable. Furthermore, some of the people we talked to considered leaving even before getting the offer from RMGC, and other still saw the mining project as the only solution for the problems in RM.

Concerning the negative aspects of resettlement that we have so far identified, these are: the loss of land and domestic animals (people with large lots of lands and/or animals adapted harder, although receiving large compensations; persons older than 60 are an exception as they couldn't work in the household and raise large animals anymore), access to common goods and services was disrupted such as to the church in RM (the thing people miss most is the atmosphere of the Sunday mass), the loss of relations and social networks (the distance between localities is small and are linked by the telephone network), and unequal treatment of older people and autochthons during the resettlement process (they adapted the hardest).

On the other hand, the advantages resettlers gained were: the monetary compensations, better living conditions (indoor plumbing, running water, sewage system, new houses, public lighting, gas powered boilers for heating during the winter), more educational opportunities for their children and grandchildren, improved access to medical facilities, job opportunities in the city, public transportation. But, although built with a network of sidewalks and roads 13 km long, the neighbourhood is virtually closed to any main or secondary traffic artery of the city. Thus, the only automobiles that travel in this area are the ones owned by residents, the small buses which link it to the centre of the city, and taxi cabs.

Starting from Michael Cernea's IRR model, and taking into account other particular cases of resettlement (Cernea, 1997, 1999; Muggah, 2000, 2003; Price, 2009; Serageldin, 1995; Zaman, 2002; Valtonen, 1998; Rohe & Scott, 1991; Jongarden, 2001; Geisler, 2002), our research builds on Alexandrescu's research and expands it to include data on resettlers in Recea and an analysis of the post-resettlement period. This analysis is based on dimensions such as the relation with the agent of resettlement and those discussed by Mahapatra & Mahapatra (2000): social re-articulation, and community regeneration.



### **Landlessness**

In terms of impoverishment risks, apart from the massive loss of land<sup>11</sup> the mining project would entail in RM, all the residents of Recea voluntarily sold their farm land before relocating, after individual negotiations with RMGC.

### **Joblessness**

The possibility of creating a large number of jobs in the new community over a short period of time is low; therefore the risk of joblessness in any resettled community is either chronic or temporary. In our case, we have the known issues which stem from mono-industrialization and loss of jobs after the closing of the mine, in 2006. The new mine is supposed to create 1200 jobs (construction period of two years) and 640 jobs (during the mining period of sixteen years), but employment is “strictly controlled by the project developers” and thus “exposes all those who do not meet business requirements to the risk of joblessness”, that is, apart from *preference*, there are no explicit contractual guarantees for jobs for RM residents (Alexandrescu, 2011: p. 96). In 2010, just when the resettlers had moved into their new homes in Alba Iulia, respondents talked of difficulties in finding a place to work and expressed dissatisfaction with leaving their previous workplace. This was made worse because people thought that RMGC would offer them jobs after relocating to Recea. The company, in fact, promised a job for only one member of the family, *when and if* the mining project would start.

In 2012 the problem persisted. The company claims people misunderstood the situation, and that, apart from explicit contractual obligations as mentioned above, they were promised only occupational consultation and help in discovering new work opportunities. However, for 2011 we can talk about new work opportunities in the city. Some got jobs as drivers, guardsmen, as unskilled workers at the ceramic factory, shopkeepers, public sanitation workers, and others in finances or education. Generally, most people were temporarily employed during the year as unskilled labourers. In 2012, the majority of those working were hired through the intermediation of RMGC at the construction companies building the church in the neighbourhood and other fifteen new houses. People are unhappy with work conditions on the construction site and with the low wage (approximately 700 Lei/month, just over 170 Euros).

### **Homelessness**

Apart from the emotional impact of losing the house in which they lived for a large part of their life and the inherent part of starting over in Recea, the house is also “home”, and therefore holds a symbolic significance for them as well. Deltenerre-De Bruycker (1992), for instance, in his study of forced displacement in the city of Snagov, in the Communism period, found that people identify with their dwellings. They do not say “My home was

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<sup>11</sup> 1660 ha replaced with 120 ha, but this seems to be of only marginal importance since the vast majority of people want to move to urban areas (Alexandrescu 2011, 94)

demolished in 1985”, but “I was demolished in 1985” or “I am part of the group of demolished from Fântână”.

In respect towards losing their houses, the fact that brand new ones were awaiting them in Recea, eliminating the troubles of building ones from scratch themselves, mattered a great deal to the resettlers. In 2012, though, discontent arose among them for it seems that a great deal of the houses in the neighbourhood is poorly built. The timing, two to three years after moving in, can be explained by the expiration of the two year warranty on the houses, and people found themselves paying out of their own pockets for structural problems up until then covered by the construction firms. Raluca<sup>12</sup>, an interlocutor, told us that, due to structural deficiencies of the roofs of their houses, the wind blew important quantities of snow in people’s attics, during the harsh winter of 2011-2012:

”(...) we asked [the builders] to put cellophane film and timber [under the roof], the way it’s done nowadays...the [housing] project was done regardless, but I think that now they’ve learned from their mistake and these [newly built] houses are fine (... .) A lot of people complained about [snow in the attic], I myself spent three hours one time wiping with a cloth water from the attic.”

This position was echoed by Victor who told us he had to carry about 200 buckets full of snow out of his attic last winter lest it crash the ceiling of their house. Even before that, cracks between the tiles of his roof caused the tiled floor of his house to swell due to water from rain dripping on it. The construction company replaced the tile from the roof and brought a special machine to drain the water from his tiled floor.

Generally speaking, probably the most serious difficulty people face is the increased costs of the utilities the neighbourhood is furnished with, a problem absent back in RM, and the increased taxes on their houses and small parcels of land in the front or backyard, due to their classification as urban area. In front of unemployment, as Alexandrescu (2011, p. 103) showed, the only insurance against impoverishment is the high level of compensation received from RMGC, that is, if the resettlers managed to save enough money after buying the house and further investments.

### ***Marginalization***

On the one hand, we have marginalization in decisions concerning the project, and, in RM, residents were marginalized “by RMGC and the NGOs that support the project as well as by the NGOs which oppose it” (Pro RM, Pro Dreptatea, Viitorul Mineritului Syndicate support, while Alburnus Maior and Soros Foundation oppose) (p. 98). Consequently, the local population is not acknowledged as a possible participant in fundamental decisions about the project, that is, no more than “adapting and coping with business decisions” (idem). In this case, the actors most affected by the mining project don’t feel represented or their rights defended by the NGOs (p. 99), moreover

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<sup>12</sup> All the names of our respondents as presented in this article are pseudonyms to guard their privacy.

they view them and some of their opinion leaders as being ‘interest groups’, groups which pursue and represent both personal and foreign interests. Alburnus Maior and Soros Foundation are primarily concerned with the environmental preservation of RM, failing at the same time to acknowledge the seriousness of the problem of lack of jobs for the population RM is confronted with.

On the other hand, marginalization can refer to the loss of human capital as well – a majority of individuals cannot use in the new community what abilities gained and exercised in the old one. We can have economic as well as social marginalization and also negative effects such as the lower socio-economic status, lower self-confidence, and confidence in people, in society etc.

The problem of marginalization and loss of human capital is evident in the case of the residents of Recea. Coming from a mono-industrial area has made it difficult for people to take up jobs (if found) in new areas of profession, and people who owned large and productive lots of lands at RM are nostalgic about the past or perceive the relocation as a loss of socio-economic status, as eminently an unfair bargain, or both. Ion, for example, had 6 ha of land, 4 ha of woodland and a little over 1000 fruit trees back in RM, which he sold, and presently has only enough space in his yard at Recea to grow some garden vegetables.

Others felt the need to apply their “householding skills” in their new home. With the money left over from RMGC, Victor first built a garage next to his house which he uses as a workshop and storage space, then built an annex to his house to use as a summer patio, and now plans to built a cottage in the space left available in the backyard, linked directly to the annex.

### ***Increased morbidity and mortality***

Alexandrescu reports that several respondents mentioned increased mortality among those who have relocated from RM. One of his respondents said that “all those who left regret it, many passed away within two – three months after they left” (p. 102), for example. While initially we didn’t find signs of increased morbidity and mortality, higher stress levels and psychological trauma in the residents of Recea, returning to the field in 2012 we discovered stress and feelings of insecurity related to, on one hand, covering utilities expenses and taxes, and, on the other, finding a place to work. We were also told about older relatives who died shortly after moving to the neighbourhood, apparently due to not being able to adapt to the new lifestyle.

### ***Social disarticulation***

This refers to the fragmentation of communities, the destruction of the patterns of social organization and interpersonal relations. For RM, Alexandrescu notes that it affects more the people left behind, “continuing to live in a `community` that is physically there, but has been `emptied` socially and culturally” (p. 97).

During the individual negotiations carried out by RMGC with the inhabitants of RM, heated arguments ignited between neighbours on the issue of the amount of money

received for their house and land. These were complemented by the wider argument if they should sell or not, in the first place. In some cases whole families, friends and neighbours stopped speaking to one another and, in general, the community social cohesion suffered from the negotiations. Apart from the reasons presented above, people chose to move to Recea because their acquaintances and neighbours were also moving their and this facilitated the maintaining of relations or helped the establishment of new relations inside the neighbourhood. Areas of RM village and especially Corna village, though, were virtually emptied of people, and the few who remained have been affected by the loss of the resettlers. But week-end visits between people in RM and people in Recea are quite frequent, and older people keep in touch by sometimes daily telephone calls. The latter is also suggestive about how well pensioners have adapted to life in Recea. Many who were able used to do household chores back at RM, but conditions at Recea, in terms of available space and utilities, do not require such labour. The improvised “solution” found by a great deal of people was to start raising poultry in their backyards, contrary to the architectural intentions and designs of RMGC’s building project.

#### ***Loss of access to common property***

It goes without saying that there is no common property available for use to the people of Recea, apart from the modern, urban public space of the roads and sidewalks. Residents do feel the lack of public space in which to gather together and socialize and, in the first years, the small temporary chapel served as a meeting place for residents wishing to partake in discussion of their problems with representatives of RMGC, in the form of “town meetings”. In the next part we will discuss more at length the initiatives of residents to solve their new-found problems and, generally, to improve their lives in Recea.

#### **The reconstruction process and post-resettlement initiatives**

Other aspects of our study included the stage we refer to as post-resettlement, which is understood as the period following resettlement in which people start rebuilding their lives in the new environment, and work to solve the different problems they are confronted with, either in relation to the new urban landscape or in relation with the company that devised and implemented the resettlement projects, in this case RMGC. The analysis contains three dimensions of investigation: (1) the regeneration of the community, (2) social re-articulation or the relation with the host society, and (3) the relation with the agent of resettlement.

#### ***Regeneration of community***

To what extent does the resettled community displays characteristics similar to the previous community? We have concentrated our efforts towards seeing in what proportion traditions and customs from RM are preserved in Recea, how were the new

households improved upon, what were the material objects people brought with them and their significance, and the formation of community boundaries.

As previous studies show (Mahapatra & Mahapatra, 2000), boundaries are important in the social articulation of communities, stopping where interaction between individuals no longer takes place. This impacts the regeneration of the community in the sense that without clearly defined boundaries, an identity conflict between members emerges. Community regeneration is also facilitated by common held myths, patterns linked to the space of resettlement, the existence of formal or informal institutions and physical borders. Analysing the Durkheimian elementary forms of religious life, Etzioni (2002, pp. 135-137) showed, for example, that rites and holidays negatively correlate with social disintegration.

Moreover, case studies such as Alexander (2008) cited by Price (2009), have shown that, after a time, resettled populations start re-establishing elements of old identity through the arranging of the household. This phenomenon has been recognized and taken into account in development projects in India, where villages were displaced into areas favourable to agriculture (their previous main occupation) so as work opportunities to not be diminished.

In a previous article (Țoc, 2012), the importance of symbolically charged objects were suggested to be essential in resisting the changes caused by resettlement. In our 2012 field visit we observed an amplification of this phenomenon in that residents decorated both the interior and the exterior of their households with symbolic objects brought from RM with the support of RMGC. These objects range from paintings of RM hanged on the outside wall, next to the front door, to pieces of quartz and other minerals from the mine kept in the living room, on little pedestals. In one instance, a resettler brought with him a sapling:

“...I put him in the car, I dug him a hole here, I planted him (and) see he’s now sprouting leaves. He’s *roșian*, you can interview him about how he lived at Roșia Montană” (Mihai, pensioner).

One of the representative cases in this regard is Victor, whom we have already mentioned in this paper. Originally from Corna village, the eighty-year old and his wife were among the first to move to Recea in 2009, joined next-door by their daughter’s family, on “Roșia Montană” street.

Apart from the garage, annex and the planned cottage which we have mentioned above Victor arranged a sort of “museum” of the mining in RM, in the front antechamber of his house. A panel inscribed “Exposition of the 2000 years mining history in the RM commune” dominates the entrance into his home, and other, smaller, panels filled with old photos and poems such as “The Miner’s Hymn” laden the walls. Classic mining tools such as hammers, protection helmets with lights, and gold pans hang at the bottom of these panels, for Victor cold remainders of the lifestyle he left and the place where he grew up, learning from his father and grandfather how to work in the mine.

On the exterior walls of the entrance and the hallway leading to the house we counted over 45 photocopies of original photographs taken as far back into the past as

the beginning of the last century, containing snapshots of everyday life in RM, tourist attractions<sup>13</sup>, and the mining production cycle<sup>14</sup>. Among the objects on display, we mention:

- A reduced scale model of an old gold processing plant, powered by the water from the river;
- Two paintings with Cetate Mountain, with the explanatory note: "Crown seat of Romanian gold. Works executed with fire and water at depth of 1004 metres are visible";
- A miner's protective helmet;
- A carbide miner's lamp used at the entrance of the mine;
- Different types of gold pans (*șaitroc*), from wood, with curved bottom, used to separate gold from crushed ore;
- A mechanical calculator, from iron, used until 1983 to calculate wages and labour standards;

The keeping of religious traditions and holidays in Recea is another aspect to be taken into account in the process of community regeneration. One local tradition from RM that isn't practiced in Recea is Easter day "pușcătură" [shootings], similar to New Year use of fireworks, because of how clustered together the neighbourhood is. Usually, this tradition is practised in large and open spaces and, although, they tried to keep the tradition in the first year, it appears the police was shortly involved by frightened neighbours. Miner's Day, obviously, is not practised anymore either, and because people consider RM the only appropriate place for this holiday anyway. On the other hand, RMGC proposed Alba Iulia's city hall a new holiday, the "Days of Recea neighbourhood", to be celebrated together with the "Days of Alba Iulia City" holiday.

Concerning the boundaries of Recea, people clearly know who is "roșian" and who is not. This is important because since the official opening, five families from other parts of the city bought houses in the neighbourhood from resettlers and moved in attracted by the perceived quality of the urban project. They are known inside the neighbourhood, but apart from the occasional greeting on the street, no other types of relations have been established.

### ***Relation with the host society***

Perhaps the most widely discussed issue in the specialty literature about resettlement is the extent to which the resettled population is integrated<sup>15</sup> in the host community or society. It has been suggested, for example, that in the case of refugee camps there is a destructive ecological impact on the host community, impact felt by people already living there, especially in areas characterized by a high level of population density, places

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<sup>13</sup> These are photocopies entitled "Saturday in RM commune, year 1900", "Street with old miner houses in RM", "Ioan Muscă's Orchestra from Abrud", and "Young Women in folk costumes".

<sup>14</sup> As before, events such as "Prayer at the entrance into the mine gallery", "The lighting of the lamps at the entrance into the mine", "The drilling of holes in the walls of the gallery" etc.

<sup>15</sup> We use here the term "integration" not as assimilation, but as social "re-articulation" (Mahapatra și Mahapatra (2000).

where tensions with autochthons can arise due to lack of paying for utilities used through improvisation and increased medical risks due to overcrowding (Muggah, 2003). Difficulties in the relationship between host population and resettled population stem primarily from incompatible socio-cultural characteristics, in our case, the differences between a rural population and an urban one.

As already mentioned, there is a physical border of vacant lots separating the neighbourhood from the rest of the city but the relation between the two has been facilitated by the common regional identity of Transylvanians. Problems arise, in fact, because the neighbourhood is perceived to be a rich men's quarter, and the resettlers as being either upstart, enriched overnight, or guilty of raising real estate prices in the area. However, these perceptions have tempered over time.

### ***Relation with the agent of resettlement***

Research done by the World Bank researchers have suggested the importance of the agents involved in carrying out resettlement, both helping resettlers adjust as quickly as possible to the new living conditions (identity documentation, school transfers etc.) and encouraging initiatives actions and linked to their own development.

A very important aspect, however, is that the resettlement and reconstruction process be not seen as a top-down process, as a paternalistic effort (Cernea, 1997). It is necessary to encourage people's relationship with relevant actors such as NGOs, the host population etc., and initiatives because these represent the first steps in rebuilding social capital.

According to the author, few things are known about individual post-resettlement initiatives of people as well as the ways in which they tend to copy behaviour models from the host population because of the low number of studies which monitored the progress made by resettlers. In the following paragraphs, we try to offer a brief glimpse into the kinds of post-resettlement initiatives taken by people, understanding them as those individual or collective actions other than those intended to finalize or arrange their households. This will also be linked to the relationship with RMGC.

In an earlier part of the research the relationship with RMGC was considered to be paternalistic, in which resettlers passively awaited the company to solve all their problems. In 2012, however, we discovered a lower level of involvement by the company in the community perhaps due to the problems it was facing in securing mining permits from the government at the time, and also because of its negative reaction to the founding of "The Resettlers from Roșia Montană to Recea Association". Although the association wasn't founded to oppose RMGC, it subsequently came to be perceived as such by the company and this caused people hired through its intervention to not join as members in fear of being fired.

The main idea behind the association was to help solve whatever collective problems appeared inside the neighbourhood. On the one hand, it was created to facilitate communication between residents of Recea and local authorities despite the company's public commitment to act as an intermediary in this respect. On the other

hand, the association was also intended to facilitate communication with RMGC after it seemingly has revoked its support after solving all the complaints in the first year. When we revisited Recea in the spring of 2012, it had 31 members contributing 5 Lei ( $\approx$ 1 Euro) per month, and organised meetings once a month in the small chapel to discuss people's problems. Ion, a member, told us

“...they said that we're doing all this against them [...] but we did it for ourselves, we have nothing against them, but we can protect ourselves anytime now”

The president, the vice-president and the few members we spoke with consider the association a success because they made their voice favourably heard to the mayor concerning the lack of sidewalks linking the neighbourhood to the city, and had talks with RMGC about, for example, the lack of trash bins and a kindergarten if the area develops in time. As Ion notes

“...people moved here three years ago and still they haven't started on the park [...] we asked for a kindergarten too because [a family] which has a small child has to sacrifice a member to take care of it, he can't work, either the husband or the wife [...] you don't have the [transportation] means to put the child in the city...”

Of course, the most sensitive issues are the unfulfilled informal promises RMGC made to resettlers during the negotiation of resettlement conditions. The project for the towering church the construction workers were busying themselves with in the spring was finally started after repeated insistences, before the association was formed, but now resettlers are pushing for the construction of a park and a multifunctional leisure hall, in place of their old communal hall in RM. Upon completion, the association plans to petition RMGC to let it administer the park and multifunctional hall alone. “Who will cover the maintenance costs is anybody's guess”, a member confessed. Members were also upset because the director of RMGC didn't come to talk with them, despite repeated promises on his part, and written and oral requests made by the association. In terms of roles and expectations, these post-resettlement issues betray a particular interpretation of the process by resettlers: as the initial paternalistic character of resettlement included financial and legal support from RMGC, the subsequent lack of it was perceived as a renouncing of responsibilities. This, in turn, strongly suggests a basic misunderstanding of the character of resettlement, its opportunities and its risks.

The compensations paid by RMGC to the majority of the resettlers amounted to thousands, if not tens of thousands of Euros, depending on the type of property previously owned. We considered it necessary to ask interlocutors what they did with the money in order to see if entrepreneurial behaviours developed. Apart from a minimally supplied grocery shop opened in 2011, located in the basement of one of the houses, and the manifested intent of one person to open a barbershop in the neighbourhood, no other such kinds of behaviours have arisen. The majority of the money was invested in arranging the households, the purchasing of automobiles and, in some cases, the purchase of flats for their children in other, bigger cities. This fact, corroborated with the



absence of long-term plans for the future and the large percentage of the money already spent, represents a problem for some residents, especially the ones who received comparatively smaller amounts of money and who live on small pensions, insufficient to cover monthly expenses in an urban setting.

## **Conclusions**

This paper offered to describe and expand on different dimensions specific to resettlement phenomena through the case study of Recea neighbourhood with an emphasis on the different social understandings of the benefits of resettlement, particularly the relationship between RMGC and resettlers. As we observed earlier, while resettlement is always forced, people left RM seemingly of their own accord, after making individual or family-centred deals with RMGC. But as we suggested here, various extralocal (the political economy of the global extractive industry; (2) the transition context of post-socialist Romania; (3) the involvement of influential transnational NGOs) and local (heated arguments between neighbours concerning the amount of money received for their house and land) forces played some part in the resettlement process.

The changes in people's lives brought about by resettlement number the inherent problems of rural-urban mobility such as greater living costs (utility bills, real estate taxes, transportation) and difficulties in finding work and professional reconversion. On the other hand, resettlers benefit from better living conditions due to utilities and public infrastructure, and greater educational opportunities for their children (easier access to schools, universities, and public libraries).

In terms of reconstruction of the community, we observed attempts rather to reproduce the lifestyle from RM than to adapt to urban life. People tried to resume the traditions and customs from RM, they invested in arranging their households as they would have in RM and recreated rural day-to-day interactions, all in the perimeter of the neighbourhood. The rest of Alba Iulia doesn't enter the picture except for grocery shopping, school and work places, if there is the case.

But at the core of resettlement lies a misunderstanding of responsibilities and risks associated with the process itself, brought about by the paternalistic nature of the relationship that developed between RM locals and RMGC in the form of the extraordinary level of company support i.e. organized visits to the construction site, the help resettlers received in changing their identity papers. The perception on the part of resettlers was that an agreement seemed to function by which any intervening problems would be taken care of by the company. Subsequently all community-scale issues (the higher utility costs, lack of internet connection, the community hall) were addressed to RMGC rather than go submitted to communal debate and problem-solving. As time passed, more and more of what we term post-resettlement initiatives have appeared in the form of a corner shop, an association of resettlers' interests and a planned barbershop.

Through the association, resettlers started to negotiate with RMGC to finance public improvement projects in the neighbourhood such as building a multifunctional

leisure hall, a park and a kindergarten, which would be administered by members. These demands were based on a series of informal promises made by the company to resettlers that were seen as having remained unfulfilled. The founding of the association and the above-mentioned demands have been perceived by the company as hostile to its interests and have contributed to the current troubled relationship between the two sides. This contrasts with resettlers' first year in the neighbourhood when RMGC offered to take care of all problems, including supplying them with means of transporting their belongings, even poultry and furniture, free of charge.

Among future directions of research, we would like to emphasize, on the one hand, the development of the relationship between the association and the company, and, on the other hand, the development over time of the relations between the residents of Recea and those of the rest of Alba Iulia.

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**Cătălin Buzoianu** has an MA in Social Anthropology and a BA in Sociology awarded by the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration in Bucharest. His academic interests are Romanian pop culture, affective mobile media, and the study of shared cultural beliefs, statements, and idea-systems in contemporary Western societies. In this latter respect, the Recea resettlement process was an opportunity to explore the various presuppositions and mental representations internalized and shared by people faced with a potentially life-changing decision – relocation. He is currently enrolled in the one-year “Master in Sociology and Social Anthropology” programme held by the Central European University in Budapest, and intends to pursue a PhD in the Anthropology of Knowledge afterwards.

**Sebastian Țoc** has an MA and BA in Sociology awarded by the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration (NSPSA), in Bucharest. His academic interests include educational inequalities in Romania, migration issues, mixed designs and methods, the analysis of categorical data etc. Since 2009 he has been conducting research in the Recea neighbourhood, Alba-Iulia, on the potentially unwanted consequences for re-settlers, and on the reconstruction of community after resettlement. Starting with October 2013 he will pursue a PhD in Sociology of Education at the NSPSA.