ROŞIA MONTANĂ IN UNESCO: THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE ON PUBLIC COMMUNICATION AND CIVIC MOBILISATION

Mihai GOŞTIU*

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Abstract: This paper shows how the Facebook group “Roşia Montană in UNESCO World Heritage” became the main source of information for the opponents of the mining project and a factor in multiplying the messages of the Save Roşia Montană Campaign in 2010-2013. Online searches for “Roşia Montană” reached a record of 200 million views in September 2013, amid protests that brought tens of thousands of Romanian citizens to the streets in order to save the town. Ancient archaeological remains (galleries, necropolises, artefacts, temple ruins and houses) and the built and industrial heritage dating from the medieval, modern and contemporary periods (houses, lakes, machinery) have been given new meanings and significance during the Roşia Montană debate, becoming symbolic goods, with a major contribution in raising awareness regarding the risks of the mining project planned in the area. The commitment for recognising the exceptional value of the local heritage for universal history and culture through the inclusion of Roşia Montană on the UNESCO World Heritage List has become the civic mobilisation engine with the greatest impact in the public debate.

Rezumat: Prezența lucrare arată cum a ajuns grupul de Facebook „Roşia Montană în UNESCO World Heritage” principala sursă de informare a opoziționarii proiectului minier și factor de multiplicare a mesajelor Campaniei Salvați Roșia Montană, în perioada 2010-2013. Cautările online cu termenul „Roşia Montană” au atins cifre record, de 200 de milioane de vizualizări, în septembrie 2013, pe fondul protestelor care au scos zeci de mii de cetățeni români în stradă pentru salvarea localității. Vestigii arheologice antice (galerii, necropole, artefactiv, ruine de temele și case) și patrimoniul construit și industrial din perioadele medievale, moderne și contemporană (case, tăuiri, utile) au avut un impact semnificativ și semnificația acestei eforturi de recunoaștere a valorii patrimoniului localizat în oraș și pentru istoria și cultura universale, prin includerea Roșiei Montane pe Lista Patrimoniului Mondial UNESCO, a ajuns să fie motorul de mobilizare civică cu cel mai mare impact în cadrul dezbaterei publice.

* “Babeș-Bolyai” University, Cluj-Napoca (PhD candidate, Doctoral School of Political and Communication Sciences); remus.gotiu@uabbcluj.ro

1. Introduction. A Historical Impact

200 million views (Fig. 1). In September 2013, this was the cumulative impact of social media posts (especially Facebook) and online press articles, blogs, aggregators, forums, etc., concerning Roşia Montană. It was the first month of civic protests for Roşia Montană, protests which lasted until 10 December 2013. The international press symbolically named them “the Romanian autumn”.¹

![Graph showing search trends for Roșia Montană](image)

"rosia montana" - ultimele 30 zile

Fig. 1. In September 2013, more than 140,000 articles, comments and posts related to Roşia Montană were published online, gathering almost 200 million views (ZeList.ro/monitor).

The impact of “Roşia Montană” Google searches was also unprecedented among any other topics related to Romania, reaching the maximum measured by Google up to that moment, namely 100.²

By comparison, in the same month, Romania’s incumbent President Traian Băsescu had an impact factor of 4 (Fig. 2). Romania’s Prime Minister Victor Ponta had one of 2, and Romania’s top trending (at that time) showbiz star Bianca Drăguşanu had one of 34. The previous maximum historical impact of the three personalities was also much lower: Traian Băsescu a factor of 43 (December 2004) during the 2004 presidential elections and 37 (December 2009) during the 2009 presidential elections; Victor Ponta, 19 in July 2012 (collapse of the Ungureanu Government and appointment of the interim Ponta Government).³

¹ Digi 24 (the newsroom) 2013.
² Goştiu 2013a.
³ Ibidem

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