An argumentative perspective on framing. Policy conflict, deliberation and framing in the Roșia Montană case

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ABSTRACT: This paper proposes a new theorization of the concept of ‘framing’, in which argumentation has a central role. To frame an issue is to offer the audience a salient and thus potentially overriding premise in a deliberative process that can ground decision and action. The analysis focuses on the Roșia Montană case, a conflict over policy that led, in September 2013, to the most significant public protests in Romania since the 1989 Revolution.

KEY WORDS: decision, deliberation, frame, framing, metaphor, policy, practical argument, Roșia Montană

1. INTRODUCTION

This article develops an approach to framing theory from the perspective of argumentation theory (Fairclough & Fairclough 2012), illustrated by the public debate around the proposed cyanide-based gold mining project at Roșia Montană (Romania). It puts forward a view of ‘framing’ as a process of offering an audience salient and potentially overriding premises that they are expected to use in deliberation leading to decision and action (Fairclough in preparation). It also aims to make an empirical contribution to the study of the Roșia Montană case, a policy conflict that has set the Romanian government and a multinational company against the population and, in September 2013, led to the most intense public protests since the fall of communism. The outcome was the rejection by the Romanian Parliament of a draft law that would have given the green light to the largest open-cast gold mining operations in Europe.

This study is part of a bigger project which analyzes a corpus of over 600 Romanian press articles, covering the months of August and September 2013, with a twofold purpose: (a) to develop and test an argumentative conception of the process of framing; (b) to gain insight into

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how four major Romanian newspapers have attempted to reflect and influence the public debate, by finding out which aspects of the policy conflict were selected and made salient in the media, and how they were intended to function in the process of public deliberation. For reasons of space, we will not analyze this corpus here, but illustrate the framework with a smaller corpus of campaign material (leaflets, slogans, placards, website information).

2. ROȘIA MONTANĂ: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Roșia Montană is a commune of 16 villages, located in the Western Carpathians, in an area rich in gold and other precious metals (Romania’s “Golden Quadrilateral”), but also in natural beauty and tradition. It has a recorded history of over 2000 years and has been a gold-mining area since Roman times. The region is faced with a range of socio-economic problems which demand a strategy of sustainable development (Plăiaș 2012). The controversial mining project advanced by the Canadian corporation Gabriel Resources Ltd. in partnership with the Romanian state (renamed Roșia Montană Gold Corporation in 2000, henceforth RMGC) has claimed to provide just such a solution, by “bring[ing] one of the world’s largest undeveloped gold projects to production” (The Roșia Montană Gold & Silver Project: A Project for Romania 2014). The project requires large-scale cyanide-leaching procedures to extract an estimated 314 tons of gold and 1,480 tons of silver from 4 open-cast pits over a 16-year period. While the economic benefits to the Romanian state have been invariably presented by the corporation as extraordinary, Romania’s equity stake in the company is only 19.31%, the other 80.69% being owned by Gabriel Resources, according to company data in 2014 (Plăiaș’s argument is specifically against the solution advocated by RMGC).

Mădroane (2014) investigated the Canadian company’s argument in favour of the project in terms of the framework for analyzing and evaluating practical arguments developed by Fairclough & Fairclough (2012). According to this framework, a practical proposal is advanced on the basis of premises specifying the intended goals of action, the circumstances of action and a means-goal relation, and is evaluated via an argument from consequence. The circumstances of action include natural, social and institutional facts that enable or constrain the action. Some of these facts constitute the ‘problem’ to be resolved by means of the proposed action (as ‘solution’). RMGC’s overall problem-solution argument, as summed up on the company’s website (under the heading Proiectul Roșia Montană/ Roșia Montană Project n.d.), rests upon circumstantial premises that represent Roșia Montană as being faced with problems in four areas – economy, environment, patrimony, community – and lacking any viable alternatives for sustainable development. Joint economic benefits (for the corporation, the region, and the Romanian state), as intended goals of action, are prominent on the website, and a number of commitments (as constraints on action) are emphasized. The company claims to be committed to norms of environmental and archaeological protection and rehabilitation, and to respecting the local population’s right to property and right to work. Aiming to address the area’s problems in all these four 4 areas (or strategy “pillars”), the company allegedly holds the key to transforming an “impoverished community with no real alternative” in accordance with a “vision” of “prosperity, growth, clean environment”, offering a “long term future for Roșia Montană” (The Roșia Montană Gold & Silver Project: A Project for Romania 2014). What lies at the centre of RMGC’s campaign to win over public opinion in Romania is the “packaging” of the project as the much-needed answer to the economic and social plight of the region, as well as a welcome contribution to Romania’s economic growth.
From the very beginning, the Roșia Montană project has been extremely controversial due to the perceived infringement of existing legislation (mining laws, property rights, national heritage protection, urbanism plans), the confidentiality of the terms of the concession licence and the intense pressure exerted by RMGC via aggressive lobbying and advertising campaigns, as well as the superficial nature of the public consultation process and the suspicion of institutional corruption. Expert analyses of the project have pointed out numerous risks and potentially unacceptable costs: the permanent destruction of the local environment, together with long-term environmental and public health risks; the irretrievable loss of ancient cultural heritage (Roman mine galleries); the destruction and displacement of local communities. The alleged benefits have been dismissed in scientific reports and studies published by reputable national and international research institutions, including the Romanian Academy, the Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies, the Union of Romanian Architects. It has been argued that, at both local and national level, the benefits would be modest (e.g. the number of jobs created during the mining operations would be very small). Through the ongoing Save Roșia Montană Campaign, the Alburnus Maior Association, an NGO set up by Roșia Montană inhabitants in 2000, has become the pillar of an increasingly strong protest movement, catalyzing other NGOs and concerned citizens. As a consequence, the technical review of the Environmental Impact Assessment report, a crucial step for RMGC in the process of obtaining the environmental permit, was suspended in 2007. However, the process was resumed in 2010, in the general context of economic recession. On August 27, 2013, the Romanian Government sent to Parliament a draft law which removed all legal obstacles and gave the corporation significant new powers. This sparked off strong public protests in many Romanian cities, lasting over 6 weeks. At the peak of these protests, 20,000-25,000 people were demonstrating on the streets of Bucharest. At the moment of writing, the company has lost significant ground following the parliamentary rejection of the special draft law (in November 19, 2013, by the Senate, and in June 3, 2014, by the Chamber of Deputies) and several other unfavourable court decisions. For details of the case see Goțiu (2013); Egresi (2011); Cocean (2012); Vesalon & Crețan (2013); see Chiper (2012) for a discourse-analytical approach.

3. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: ARGUMENTS AND FRAMES

3.1. Practical arguments and deliberative activity types

Practical argumentation is argumentation about what ought to be done, as opposed to theoretical argumentation about what is the case (Walton 2006, 2007a, 2007b; Walton et al. 2008). Deliberation is an argumentative genre in which practical or pragmatics argumentation is the main argument scheme. Van Eemeren (2010, pp. 142-143) distinguishes among genres, activity types and concrete speech events. A particular policy debate (e.g. on the Roșia Montană mining project) instantiates the more abstract category of policy debate as activity type, which in turn instantiates the abstract genre of deliberation. Deliberation is a genre common to many activity types; its intended outcome is a normative-practical conclusion that can ground decision and action. Policy making involves putting forward and critically testing proposals for action, by weighing together reasons in favour and against them, on this basis putting forward a policy decision.

Practical argumentation can be viewed as argumentation from circumstances, goals (underlain by values) and means goal relations (Fairclough & Fairclough 2011, 2012, 2013):
The agent is in circumstances C.
The agent has a goal G (G is generated by a particular normative source).
Generally speaking, if an agent does A in C then G will be achieved.
Therefore, the Agent ought to do A.

Practical reasoning is a causal argumentation scheme (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004). Actions have both intended and unintended effects, and the same effect can result from a multiplicity of causes. The unintended effects can be such that the action had better not be performed, even if the intended effect (goal) can be achieved by doing A. If this is the case, then a critical objection to A has been exposed and the hypothesis that the agent ought to do A has been falsified (or rebutted). A pragmatic argument from negative consequence (the left-hand side of Figure 1) can potentially falsify (rebut) the practical proposal (conclusion) itself. This argument has the following form:

If the Agent adopts proposal A, consequence (effect) E will follow. Consequence E is unacceptable. Therefore, the Agent ought not to adopt proposal A.

A succinct way of representing the type of argumentation in deliberative activity types is as follows, where the conclusion of the practical argument from goals, values and circumstances is tested by a pragmatic argument from consequence (Fairclough forthcoming a):

As Figure 1 shows, we reason practically from an assessment of the circumstances of action (this includes the problem we have identified, but also other facts enabling or constraining action), from the goals and values whose realization we are pursuing, from means-goal relations, as well as from premises that refer to the potential consequences of our proposed action, in light of which it may follow that we ought to discard our proposal for action or, on the contrary, we may go ahead with it. If the consequences are, on balance, unacceptable, then the proposal is unreasonable and ought to be abandoned. If however the consequences are not unacceptable, then the agent may (tentatively) proceed with A. The conclusion in favour of doing A can be also supported by a presumptive argument from positive consequence (right-hand side of Figure 1): if the consequences (both intended and unintended, as far as they can be foreseen) are positive, then the action may tentatively proceed, subject to future rebuttal, should critical objections come to light at a later date (Fairclough forthcoming a, b).
A critical objection against a proposal (e.g. an unacceptable consequence or cost) is one that cannot be overridden by other reasons in favour (e.g. by any potential benefit). Deliberation involves a ‘weighing’ of reasons and the conclusion is arrived at on balance, in a context of facts that both enable and constrain action, and in conditions of uncertainty and risk. The institutional facts (obligations, rights, commitments) of the legal, political, moral domain (what Searle 2010 calls deontic, desire-independent reasons) are, in principle (though not always in practice), non-overridable. For example, an agent might come to the conclusion that Proposal A ought to be abandoned because it is against the law or is unjust, full stop, regardless of any reasons (e.g. benefits) that might have seemed to incline the balance in favour of going ahead with A.

3.2. Framing theory

According to Entman, writing in 1993, Framing Theory is a good example of a “fractured paradigm”, with a highly “scattered conceptualization” at its core. While nearly everybody in the social sciences talks about framing, there is no clear understanding of what frames are and how they influence public opinion (Entman 1993, p. 51). Many often-cited definitions in the literature are vague and unhelpful, e.g. those of frames as “organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time” (Reese 2001, p. 11), or as “principles of selection, emphasis and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters” (Gitlin 1980, p. 6). The same type of criticism still occurs twenty years later (see D’Angelo & Kuypers 2010), with Nisbet noting the persistent loose usage of the term ‘frame’ and every researcher’s tendency to “reinvent the wheel” by identifying their own (often highly idiosyncratic) set of frames, without thereby producing a clear operationalization of the concept that might be used across different sets of data (Nisbet 2010, pp. 45–46).

Surprisingly, Fillmore’s (1985, 2006) definition of frames, as developed in Frame Semantics and the FrameNet project (International Computer Science Institute n.d.) – a new dictionary concept, in which words are defined in relation to world knowledge – is hardly ever cited by framing theorists working in political communication and media studies. According to Fillmore, frames are structures of inter-related concepts, such that in order to understand any one concept it is necessary to understand the entire structure (frame). To understand what risk is, one needs to understand the entire RISK frame, involving agents, situations, actions, intended gains or benefits, potential harm and victims, an element of chance, and so on (Fillmore & Atkins 1992). Any one individual concept within a frame will activate the whole frame (e.g. ‘week’ activates the whole system of calendric terms: ‘day’, ‘month’, ‘year’).

A substantial part of framing theory research seems to be underlain primarily by a notion of the framing process, rather than of ‘frames’ as systems of inter-related concepts. Framing, on this view, involves taking or promoting a particular perspective or angle on an issue and “refers to the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue”. It is this selective angle that is responsible for the highly vexing phenomenon of “framing effects”, where “(often small) changes in the presentation of an issue or an event produce (sometimes large) changes of opinion” (Chong & Druckman 2007, p. 104). The most often cited in these terms is Entman’s view of framing as selection and salience:

Framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. Typically frames diagnose, evaluate, and prescribe... (Entman 1993, p. 52).
Entman’s selection-and-salience definition above is a definition of framing, not frames. Framing involves inclusion, exclusion, selective emphasis, putting forward a particular conceptualization, a particular angle. I may, for example, choose to emphasize the benefits of a course of action and correspondingly de-emphasize the costs, in order to sway an audience towards accepting my proposal. However, unless frames are also structures of inter-related concepts, what are we selecting from? How can one element be selected and highlighted unless it is part of a structure where other elements are correspondingly de-emphasized?

Although Entman does not develop his view in relation to a theory of argument, his definition is obviously compatible with an approach from argumentation theory. If the framing process aims to define and diagnose problems, as well as suggest solutions, then it is involved in a form of practical, deliberative reasoning, oriented towards decision (and possibly) action, attempting to direct the audience towards a particular decision, a particular line of action. In framing an issue in a particular way, a communication source (media or political elites) is supplying those particular premises that may lead the audience towards a particular conclusion. The communication source can talk about an issue by means of any complex speech act – argument, narrative, description, explanation; the audience however are expected to use these messages as sources of premises in their own reasoning process, leading to practical conclusions and possibly to decision and action. From the audience’s perspective, the aspects that are being selected and made salient are elements of a DECISION frame (Fairclough in preparation).

The gist of the argumentative approach to framing being proposed here is this: to frame an issue is to offer the audience a salient and thus potentially overriding premise in a deliberative process that can ground decision and action. Values, goals, potential consequences, as well as various facts pertaining to the context of action can all be made selectively more salient in an attempt to direct the audience towards a particular, preferred conclusion. In this process, metaphors and persuasive definitions may be used to redefine facts in rhetorically convenient ways and thus lend support either to the practical claim that A should be performed or that it should not. The proposal (practical conclusion) itself can be made more salient by redefining it in a way that suggests it either should or should not be adopted. When framing involves metaphors (X is Y), analogies (X is like Y) or persuasive definitions (X is a kind of Y), an additional mechanism is at work: two frames, corresponding to the target and source domains, are mapped onto one another, so that the entailments of the source domain can be used to reason about the target domain. The spin or bias that such persuasive definitions or metaphors will introduce into the premises of the deliberation scheme will be reflected, via their entailments, in the particular conclusion that can be reached on the basis of these premises. The framing process is thus seen to shape the inferences that the audience can make. The rational acceptability of all these equivalences (metaphors, analogies, definitions) can and should be critically challenged. Showing that they do not withstand criticism, that they are false or even deceptive, as the case may be, will defeat the arguments in which they are embedded.

Based on the deliberation scheme, a DECISION frame can be outlined (on the model of Fillmore’s frames, e.g. the RISK frame), including arguers/agents in a situation of incomplete knowledge (uncertainty and risk), putting forward and evaluating one or more proposals for action (alternatives), amongst which they will choose and decide in favour of one. They have goals and values, and are acting in a context of facts (circumstances), some of which enable or constrain action – for example there are laws, rules, norms that constrain what can be done, there are alternative means at their disposal that could also be chosen. Their proposal has potentially negative consequences, some of which will be critical objections against it. Within this frame, as
system of inter-related concepts, various reasons (premises) can be emphasized in principle as being the most relevant and important, i.e. the ones that should arguably decide which course of action is adopted. For example, it can be argued that a (policy) proposal should be adopted because it will have positive consequences (e.g. it will create jobs), or that it should not be adopted because of its potential negative consequences (e.g. it will harm the environment or will clash with existing legislation). In a process of weighing reasons, the audience may come to see either the benefits or the negative consequences as “heavier”, more relevant reasons, and the conclusion (and decision) they will reach may shift accordingly. Alternatively, the circumstances of action may be ‘problematised’ (and made salient) in such a way as to suggest that a particular line of action is recommended.

Briefly, making one element of the deliberation schema more salient, while correspondingly de-emphasizing others, is expected to result in a shift in the decision for action that the audience will arrive at, given that the salient reason is expected to override other reasons in the process of weighing reasons (Fairclough in preparation). It does not follow, of course, that the audience will be actually influenced in this way, and that they will automatically ground their conclusions (decisions) in the premises made salient through framing. In real-world contexts, framing effects are weakened by the public’s exposure to alternative arguments, their ability to come to their own conclusion, as well as by their pre-existing beliefs and values (Sniderman & Theriault 2005; Chong & Druckman 2007).

Not all framing occurs within argumentative, deliberative processes. Narrative framing of agents (their identities and relationships) occurs within particular types of story-telling which cast participants in archetypal roles of ‘villains’, ‘heroes’, ‘victims’ and so on. Argumentative and narrative framing often co-exist within the same text, and both are contributing, directly or indirectly, to steering the public’s decision (conclusion) in a particular direction. They are however distinct, being underlain by two distinct abstract genres, deliberation and narrative. Not all argumentative framing functions by making one particular aspect (premise) of the deliberation scheme more salient, i.e. emphasizing one reason at the expense of others (e.g. some overriding value, e.g. freedom of speech, at the expense of the potential negative consequences, e.g. the risk of violence, or vice-versa, as in the case of Nelson et al’s 1997 classic study of tolerance towards the Ku Klux Klan). Equivalency framing of the type investigated by Tversky & Kahneman (1981) operates by linguistically reformulating the same issue (premise) in a way that favours a particular decision outcome (Fairclough in preparation).

4. ANALYSIS

The present article is part of a larger study on the August-September 2013 coverage of the Roșia Montană case in four Romanian daily broadsheets: Adevărul, Jurnalul Național, Gândul and Cotidianul. Our search for the keyword ‘Roșia Montană’ in the online archives of the newspapers resulted in 670 articles, divided as follows: 323 in Adevărul, 217 in Gândul, 93 in Jurnalul Național and 67 in Cotidianul. A detailed discussion of this corpus is beyond the scope of this short paper and is being undertaken elsewhere. In order to test and illustrate how the analytical framework described in section 3 can shed light on framing processes, including framing effects, we will discuss a few examples taken from the campaigns in favour and against the mining project, and particularly from the slogans used by the protesters.

The campaign in favour of the project (see RMGC’s official website, RMGC: Roșia Montană Gold Corporation – Proiectul Roșia Montană n.d.) tended to emphasize the company’s
intended goals, among which the benefits to the Romanian state and the local area – jobs and local development, income for the Romanian state – and particular circumstances of action: poverty, underdevelopment, as well as people’s right to work. In general, the benefits were said to outweigh the costs, and the impact on the environment and cultural heritage was presented as minimal, with emphasis on the redressive action allegedly in place. Thus, the argument went, given the significant economic benefits to all parties concerned, particularly the Romanian side, and given that these would clearly outweigh any negative impact, and also given the population’s right to work (a deontic reason, in principle non-overridable), the Roșia Montană project ought to go ahead. By contrast, not allowing the project to proceed would not only damage these goals, but would also undermine the local population’s rights. Framing the deliberative process in this way, i.e. making these particular premises salient and potentially overriding, was intended to support a decision in favour of the project.

Arguments against the project (e.g. the Alburnus Maior Association website: rosiamontana.org – Campania Salvați Roșia Montană n.d.) emphasized primarily a range of unacceptable negative consequences: the destruction of four mountains, the environmental and health impact of the cyanide-based technology (12,000 tons of cyanide would be used and 13 million tons of mining waste produced each year, eventually leaving behind a lake containing 215 million cubic metres of cyanide-contaminated water); the definitive loss of a precious resource that the Romanian state ought to be able to exploit in its own interest. These were presented as negative consequences that cannot be overridden by any benefits, particularly as job creation would be minimal and only for a limited period of time. The argument was also sometimes framed as an issue of inter-generational justice (it is our duty towards future generations to keep the gold in the country for future exploitation) and predominantly as a legal issue – the violation of existing (environmental) laws and (property) rights was deemed unacceptable, and the draft law was also said to be “unconstitutional”. Framing the conflict in terms of unacceptable negative consequences that cannot be outweighed by any benefits and non-overridable deontic reasons (rights, duties, laws, the Constitution) was intended to sway the deliberative process in favour of the conclusion that the project ought to be rejected.

The framing of the conflict developed over time and new premises were made salient in the attempt to influence public opinion. Starting as a battle over the environment, the conflict eventually developed into a battle over democracy and the rule of law in Romania and against the capture of the state by the interests of global corporations (Vesalon & Crețan, p. 449). Reporting on the situation in Romanian last September, an article in The Guardian (Ciobanu 2013) cited an NGO activist as saying the following:

It is very interesting that such a revolt began with a case of protecting the environment, but this is not only about the environment ... (...) The Roșia Montană case – in which you see legislation custom made to serve the interests of a corporation – highlights some failures of both democratic institutions and of the economic system, capitalism in a broader sense... Roșia Montană is the battle of the present and of the next decades... It illustrates the end of post-1989 cleavages [communist vs. anti-communist, European vs. non-European] and the emergence of new ones. People today confront a corrupted political class backed up by a corporation and a sold out media; and they ask for an improved democratic process, for adding a participatory democracy dimension to traditional democratic mechanisms.

The conflict therefore was no longer only about the environment, but about how global corporations can buy out national governments and national media and force them to act in their interests, as well as about the population’s demand for a truly representative democracy – one slogan was: “Not in my name” (“Nu în numele meu”). The unacceptability of bending legislation
so as to facilitate the handing over of Romania’s resources to a multinational corporation, mostly for the benefit of the latter and for the personal gain of politicians, was reflected in the slogan: “A corporation cannot dictate legislation” (“Nu corporația face legislația”). The slogan captured the protest against the subordination of the state to corporate interest – what Monbiot (2001) has theorized as the “captive state”, or the “corporate takeover” of states, a situation where the power of multinational corporations is threatening the foundations of democratic government and undermining national sovereignty. Framing the deliberative process in this way made the legal and political aspects salient and potentially overriding: allowing a corporation’s interests to prevail was against the Constitution and against Romania’s democratic form of government. The project’s goals cannot, on this view, override the unacceptable consequences that would result from its clash with the law and the Constitution. The latter are deontic constraints on action, part of the circumstances of action as institutional facts, and are in principle non-overridable.

Premises of the form \( a = b \) (\( a \) is similar to \( b \), or \( a \) is a kind of \( b \)) can provide support for various premises in the arguments from goals or consequences. A widely used metaphor was that of the Roșia Montană project as a case of robbery, with slogans saying “Halt the Great Robbery” (“Opriți Marele Jaf”), or “Thieves” (“Hoiții”), framing the project by primary reference to the rule of law. These metaphors fit into the argument from negative consequence, supporting the premise that the effects will be unacceptable. (On what grounds are the consequences unacceptable? On the grounds that the whole project amounts to the illegal attempt to appropriate someone else’s property and this is unacceptable). Saying that the mining project is framed as robbery is saying that (1) two frames are placed in correspondence, and our understanding of the project is now supposed to be structured by the ROBBERY (or more generally LEGAL) frame; (2) the premise containing the metaphor is made salient and, as a consequence, via its entailments (i.e. if it is robbery, then it is illegal), the metaphor will support only one possible conclusion. Briefly, the policy being proposed goes against the law; such a consequence is unacceptable; it follows that the proposal should be abandoned. Similarly, the project was seen as an act of national treason.

Other metaphors function in a similar way. The protests were called a revolution, with placards saying: “Our generation’s own revolution” (“Revoluția generației noastre”) or “Europe’s Green Revolution”. Assuming that the action which is recommended is opposition to the project, framing the opposition as a revolution supports the premise which says that the effects would be desirable (why? because, like a revolution, the protests pursue a radical change of an undesirable status quo) and indirectly supports the conclusion that opposing the mining project is the right kind of action. By contrast, the government’s stance was equated with a declaration of war, in publicity material saying: “The Government and RMGC have declared war on us all” (“Guvernul și RMGC ne-au declarat război”) and are keeping the country under siege – “do not forget that Romania is now under siege...” (“nu uitați că România e acum în stare de asediu”), as well as with the attempt to sell the country out to a foreign corporation (placards and slogans saying: “My Romania is not for sale”, “România mea nu e de vânzare”). In the argument from negative consequence that challenges the mining project, such metaphors support the premise saying that the consequences are unacceptable (why? because the consequences of a war, siege or selling a country would be unacceptable, and going ahead with the project is similar to all these) and thus, via their entailments, support the conclusion that the project ought not to go ahead. In the argument from positive consequence, if the project amounts to saving Roșia Montană from chronic poverty, then it should go ahead. If, on the other hand, it is opposition to the project that amounts to saving Roșia Montană from environmental catastrophe, then opposing the project is the right thing to do. The ‘problem’ itself can be reframed by metaphor or definition. If the
context of action is one of **national emergency** or **crisis** that can only be resolved by public opposition, then it follows that opposing the project is the right thing to do.

The deliberation scheme (Figure 1) can be used to represent the arguments of both parties involved in the conflict: the argument in favour of the mining project (where *Action A is recommended = Allowing the mining project to go ahead is recommended*) and the argument in favour of opposing it (where *Action A is recommended = Opposing the mining project is recommended*). The acceptability of the former conclusion is challenged by arguments from negative consequence that point to unacceptable potential impacts on the environment, laws, democratic rights. The acceptability of the latter conclusion is challenged by arguments from negative consequence alleging that the protests are potentially undermining the right to work of the local population and the economic prospects of the area. The same scheme can therefore be used to represent, in turn, both sets of arguments from goals and consequences, i.e. the arguments in favour of both lines of action and their critical evaluation in terms of their consequences.

When framing involves metaphors, analogies or persuasive definitions, two frames, corresponding to the target and source domains, are mapped onto one another, so that the entailments of the source domain can be used to reason about the target domain. We use the entailments of ROBBERY (i.e. the action is wrong and illegal) to reason about the POLICY proposal. If the proposal amounts to robbery, then (because robbery is unacceptable, being wrong and illegal) the proposal should be abandoned. Figure 2 indicates how argumentation involving analogy, metaphor or definition can support the basic practical/pragmatic argumentation. It illustrates three of the various reasons for action that have been made salient in the public debate on this policy proposal. In the argument that challenges the mining project in light of its unacceptable consequences, the mining project (proposal A) is framed as *robbery or treason* – represented here on the bottom-left of the diagram, supporting the conclusion that A (going ahead with the project) is not the right thing to do. In the alternative argument, that views the opposition to the project as the right thing to do (action A), framing the context of action as one of **national emergency** (here, at the bottom-centre) and the opposition itself as an act of **saving or rescuing** the area from environmental catastrophe (here, on the bottom-right) support the conclusion that A (opposing the project) is the right thing to do. (For convenience, all these three examples of framing have been represented on the same diagram, although what *action A* amounts to for those who use the *robbery* metaphor is different from what it amounts to for those who use the *salvation* metaphor and the **national emergency** definition).
Metaphors, analogies or persuasive definitions may thus be employed to provide audiences with justification for or against a course of action, indicating desirable effects (right, in Figure 2), undesirable effects (left, in Figure 2) or problematizing the context of action in a way that leads to particular solutions on the basis of analogy with a situation familiar to audiences (centre, in Figure 2). The means-goal premise can also be supported in this way (but there are no examples of this sort in this small corpus). In the current debate on fracking in the UK (which is the object of another study), the means-goals premise is made salient by redefining shale gas as a bridging or transition fuel that will ensure that a low-carbon future can be achieved. Once this persuasive definition is accepted, the practical conclusion that fracking should be allowed to proceed seems the right thing to do, in view of the goals. The question is, of course, whether this persuasive definition is acceptable, i.e. whether shale gas will be used to displace coal, rather than alongside coal, thus undermining the intended goals (and suggesting that opposing fracking is perhaps the right thing to do).

5. CONCLUSION

This paper has tried to make a contribution to framing theory by suggesting that framing is equivalent to a process of making salient, and thus potentially overriding, a particular premise in a deliberative process that the audience is supposed to engage in. This process is supposed to lead the audience to decision and (possibly) action. Based on how they weigh a variety of reasons against each other, which in turn may depend on which reasons have been made salient and which have been omitted, the audience is supposed to reach a particular practical-normative conclusion and on this basis (possibly) a decision to act in a particular way. Framing effects may be stronger or weaker depending on how the framing process interacts with the audience’s own beliefs and values, and on the audience’s exposure to alternative arguments, as well as their ability to weigh these arguments together in a deliberative process.

We have argued that framing involves making a particular premise of the basic deliberation scheme more salient (e.g. the consequences, the values, the problem) and potentially more relevant and significant in a decision-making process. One way of doing this is by redefining, in a rhetorically convenient way, any of the premises or conclusions involved in the deliberation process. Such redefinition is done in terms of another frame, whose inferences...
(entailments) lend support to a particular decision outcome. Figure 1 shows the whole range of basic premises that can be selected and made salient, in principle, in the attempt to direct the conclusion of the arguments involved in the Roșia Montană debate: the circumstances of action, for example the institutional constraints (laws, rights) or the problem that needs solving (poverty); the goals or intended benefits (jobs, national revenue); the side-effects (environmental degradation, loss of cultural heritage), and so on. If the project is seen to go against the law, the Constitution, democracy itself, i.e. if it has unacceptable consequences that cannot be outweighed by any positive consequence, then it should not be allowed to proceed. Similarly, if the potential consequences on the environment and public health are deemed to be non-overridable, the project should not go ahead. If, on the other hand, it can be shown that negative consequences are minor, risks are small or can be mitigated (e.g. by risk-management measures and regulation), while the promised benefits are significant, the project should be allowed to proceed. In addition to making such basic premises salient and potentially overriding, various other premises that support the basic premises and contain metaphors, analogies or persuasive definitions can be made selectively more salient, and their entailments will be transferred (upwards, in these diagrams) towards particular conclusions (Figure 2 indicates three such possibilities out of several; every premise, as well as the two conclusions, can be redefined in terms of another frame).

This study is developed in two forthcoming papers. Starting from the structure of practical reasoning in deliberative activity types, Fairclough (in preparation) develops the argumentative approach to framing in more detail and also adds a DECISION “frame” to Fillmore’s FrameNet dictionary. Starting from the brief analysis presented here, a systematic analysis of the entire media corpus of 670 media texts, in terms of the framework outlined here, will be carried out in Mădroane (in preparation).

REFERENCES


