

## **THE CAPITALIZATION OF THE TOURISTIC POTENTIAL OF COZLA MOUNTAIN**

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**Abstract:** A rich and varied local tourist potential involves various and complementary ways of valorizing it besides a real responsibility for local authorities in a sustainable managing that potential. For a real supporting of local tourism as that would become a major field in economic development for that community, local administration has to assume the role of governance factor of local touristic patrimony instead of exploiting it. A good capitalizing of local touristic potential means less local public investments which allways are limited, but more European funds and private investments for great projects, besides a sensible administration of all local resources.

**Keywords:** potential, valorizing, administration, public investments, private investments

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### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Some introductory and methodological considerations**

The principles and exactingness of market economy require generally for Romanian tourism and especially for local one, the surpassing of romantic stage of tourism towards a realistic and pragmatic one, as approaching some inovating and integrated valorizing ways of different types of touristic potential.

In the teritorial structure of a touristic town as Piatra Neamț, a mountain peak is a simple component of a geomorphological and urban-functional system, inter-relating on the horizontal plan with the other components and being integrated on the vertical plan into a subsystemical hierarchy. If that peak is summing various types of touristic potential with many possibilities of valorizing, that stands out as a major touristic guiding mark. Coming together in an only manner the natural and anthropic characteristics of Cozla peak, that gives to it a distinct personality and a better advantage among the other peaks in local area, turn it into a central element for the process of local touristic development.

The evaluation methodology for touristic potential of Cozla Mountain and for the

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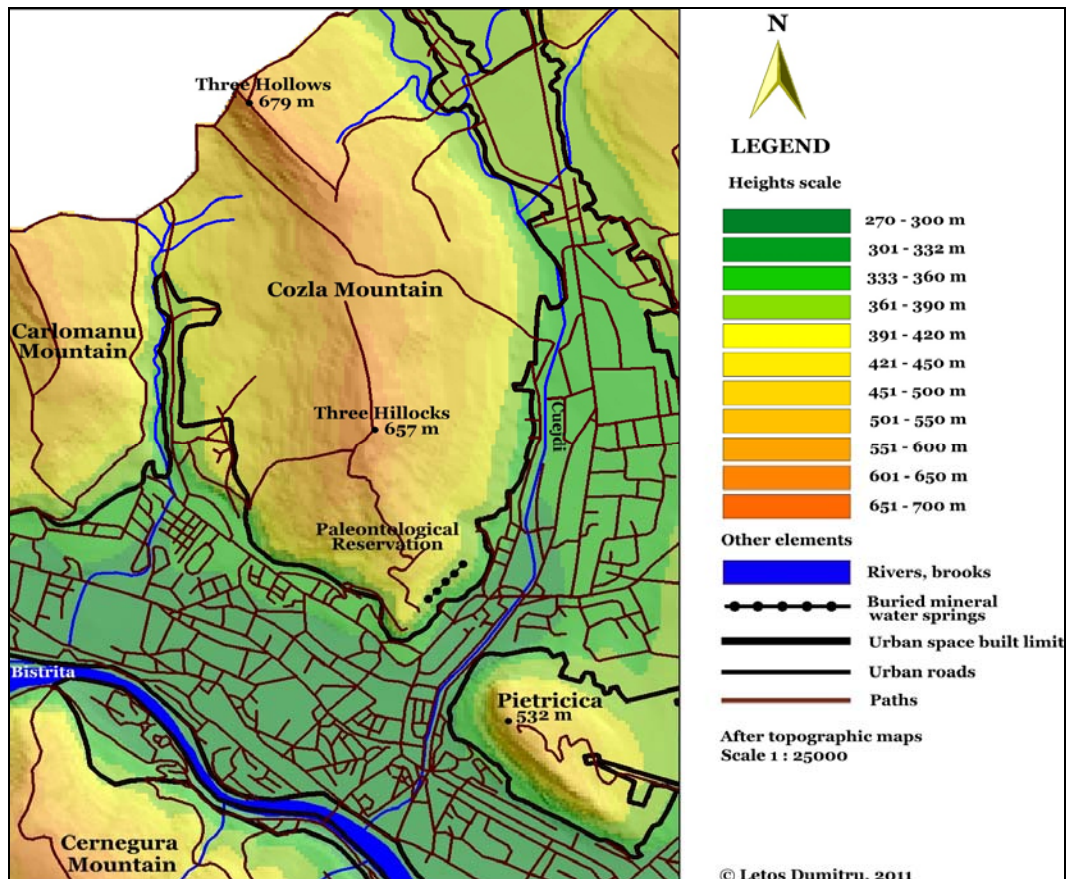
possibilities of efficient valorizing of it is based on the logic of analysing after the simple algorithm model: analyse of existent potential (natural and anthropic), analyse of the stages in capitalizing the local touristic potential, analyse the degree of economic efficiency of the investments in touristic infrastructure, making the diagnosis concerning the present level of valorizing the existent potential, prospecting the possibilities of future valorizing of touristic potential and making more efficient the future investments (Muntele and Iațu, 2003).

An objective and efficient evaluation of a local touristic potential, besides the prospecting the ways of capitalizing it, may conduct to a better substantiation of decisions and to a more sensible administration of existent resources, including the identification of favourable sources of financing the investments, as the opinion supported by the Guide of European Observatory LEADER (Evaluation of touristic potential).

## THE TOURISTIC POTENTIAL OF COZLA MOUNTAIN

### Natural touristic potential

Spread in the northern part of Piatra Neamț town, Cozla peak borders in the west with Carloman peak, separated by the valley of Borzoghean brook and with Pietricica peak in the south-east, separated by the valley of Cuejdi brook. Limited in the south part of Bistrița Valley, Cozla peak belongs to the east margin of Eastern Carpathians as a component of Stânișoara Mountains (figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Geomorphological map of Cozla Mountain and its proximity  
(Adapted after Schubert & Franzke, Cluj Napoca, 2007)

This peak has a long shape from the north to south and has its south part integrated and fully used into the urban habitat, and its north part spread into the administrative area of the town.

From geological point of view, this area belongs to the eastern part of Carpathians at the contact between Carpathian lees and extra-Carpathian lees, standing out a great variety of rocks of different age. From the perspective of this study, the great variety of waved lees rocks is very important, which belong to many types as: clay, sand, gritstone.

In tectonic perspective, the area of Piatra Neamț town is situated on a double contact: between eastern Carpathian margin and western Subcarpathian margin; between marginal zone and the store of Miocen lees.

The geomorphological perspective reveals an asymmetrical aspect, a steep side in the west and calm sides in south and east. At the contact between the mountain side and the upper terrace of Bistrița there are stored sediments of contact. The general aspect of the relief of this mountain is an alternance of little slopes about 5-10° degrees and steep slopes about 10-20° degrees and even more 20° degrees and from place to place appearing traces of old ground slides. Having a long shape, the altitude varies along the top of the peak, from 657 m at „*Trei Coline*” („*Three Hillocks*”) in the south part to 679 m at „*Trei Caldari*” („*Three Hollows*”) in the north part (Letos, 2004), (figure 2).

On the south-east side of the peak, there were discovered five springs with mineral water in 1882 rich in NaCl and  $Mg_2SO_4$  being famous for cure qualities as the mineral water from Balătești and recomanded after laboratory analyses made by Petre Poni for curing digestive, liver, spleen and circulatory system affections.

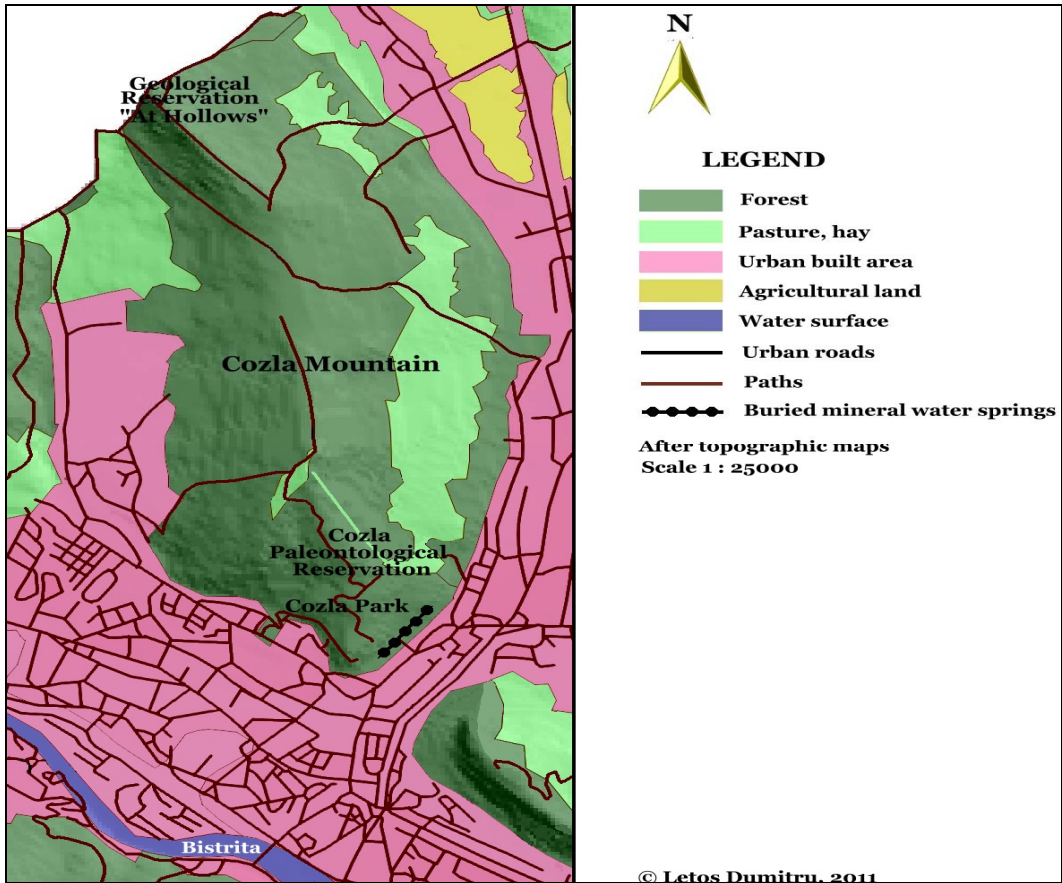
The mineral water had been used for medical purpose for about 50 years after that the springs were abandoned and buried during some works for arranging the side of the mountain after some ground slides, and also for the lack of initiative from the administrative authorities. The existence and curing importance of the mineral water springs was widely described by past writings (writer Constantin D. Gheorghiu, 1890 and priest Constantin Mătașă, 1929). The researchers of that period established the mineral springs were linked by the layers of rocks especially those rich in NaCl and  $MgSO_4$  (Bostan, 2008).

From the perspective of vegetation, Cozla Mountain is covered with forests about 70%, being secondary forests, mainly beech forests at the foot of the mountain and on the east side and with domination of coniferous forests on the top and on the west side (spruce fir and pine trees), (figure 2) conferring a good quality for air and natural landscape.

From the climatic point of view, Cozla Mountain area is situated at the east margine of mountain climate contacting the hill climate but also at the meeting of excessive continental climate and the oceanic climate, generally offering good conditions for varied activities mainly for tourism due to its micro-climate. From combining these different climates and influences results a moderate micro-climate with annual average temperature of 6°-8°C and annual average rainfall of 700-900 mm, with very small differences of temperature and humidity between west and east sides. The altitude stands out a cooler micro-climate on the top during the summer and moderate during the winter, safe from frequent foggs and climatic excesses (Letos, 2004).

The moderate micro-climate associated with low altitude and the presence of forests on large area confer this peak a good potential for climatical tourism and even complementary advantages for many other touristic activities during the year such as: hiking, making different sports, cure with aerosols just near the town.

Due to the great variety of rocks and mainly for remainder of sea creatures' skeletons which imprinted varied inscriptions in the rocks, there is Cozla Paleontological Reservation that covers 10 ha and includes also a Geological Reservation named „*La Caldari*” („*At Hollows*”). The three hollows made in rock by wind, have a round shape and 60 cm in diameter, having scietifical value and being declared natural monuments for their rarity.



**Figure 2.** Map of natural touristic potential of Cozla Mountain  
(Adapted after Schubert & Franzke, Cluj Napoca, 2007)

Besides these advantages, the touristic fitting out of Cozla Mountain has to take into account some vulnerabilities which in special conditions can generate some risky situations as those resulted from ground slides and leakage on the sides during rainy periods with torrential character or during sudden snow melting.

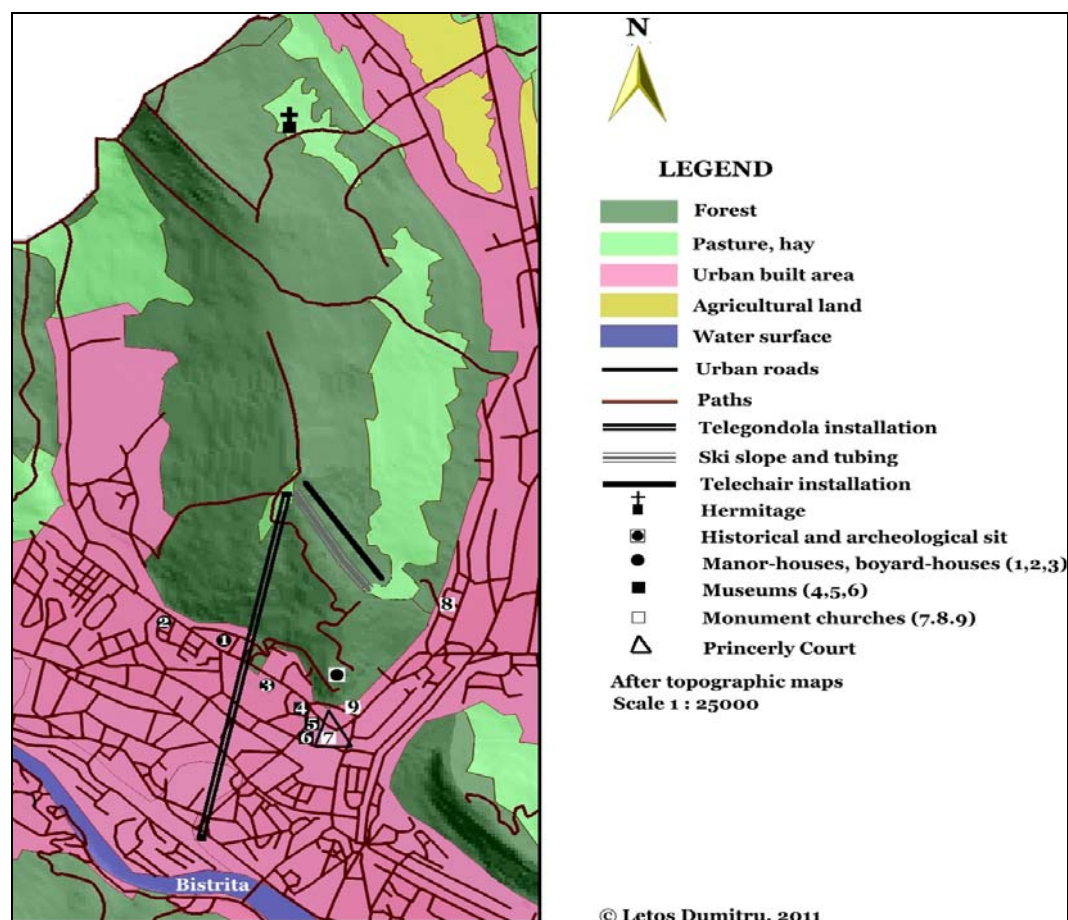
### **Anthropical touristic potential**

The anthropical potential of Cozla Mountain is summing some objectives created and generated by human intervention in the mountain area and in its neighbourhood, even the foot of the mountain which is connected tightly with the mountain due to its position, historical evolution, morphological and functional relations. Thus, the foot of the western side of Cozla Mountain where there is Ștefan cel Mare Street, even though it belongs to the superior terrace of Bistrița River (370 m), it is so tightly connected with the mountain as a contact place, so that it can be included to the mountain area from many points of view: proximity, dominant position opposite to the valley, historical evolution, economic activities, etc.

The first necessary and successful anthropical intervention upon the natural background concerning the fitting out and efficient use, carried on 1900-1904 when was arranged Cozla Park on Nicu Albu initiative, as town mayor and after huge ground slides happened in May 1897 (Hogea, 1936). The works pursued the fitting out some terraces on the south side for its stabilization and accessibility. The excavations during the works dug

out different Dacian objects and together the later remainder proved to the researchers the existence of a Dacian settlement on Cozla Mountain (location - La Pavilion), as it was sustained by the work of Gheorghe Grintescu published in 1907 “*A new prehistorical station on Cozla Mountain in Neamț county*” (Bostan, 2008), (figure 3).

The fitting out upon the time of summer terraces, restaurants, zoo park, playground for children and belvedere places have been making to increase the touristic importance of the park.



**Figure 3.** Map of anthropical touristic objectives in Cozla Mountain area  
(Adapted after Schubert & Franzke, Cluj Napoca, 2007)

On the south foot of Cozla Mountain, on the superior terrace of Bistrița River, there was built during the reigning of Ștefan cel Mare (Steven the Great) “*The Princely Court of Piatra*” documentary mentioned on 20th of April 1491, inside that there were built St. John Church and Belfry Tower a few years later (1498-1499), (no. 7, figure 3). Even though the walls of the old court didn’t resist till today, the two historical and religious edifices have been guarding at the south foot of Cozla Mountain near the Princely Court Museum (Community of historical researchers at Historical Museum, 1992) (figure 3).

Since other historical period (XIX-th century) there are 5 buildings in the neighbourhood of Cozla Mountain belonging to the cultural patrimony of the town due to their architectural value, but still insufficiently valorized for tourism: St. Nicholas Church (on the foot of east side, no. 8, figure 3); Sinagoga Cathedral (on the foot of south-east



side, no. 9, figure 3); Lalu House as manor-house with special architecture (on the foot of south-west side, Children Palace today, no. 1, figure 3); Elena Cuza House as an old manor-house (on the foot of south-west side, no. 2, figure 3); Albu House (on the foot of south-west side, no. 3, figure 3), adding also Draga Hermitage on the east side of the mountain (figure 3).

The presence of those 3 museums inside the Princely Court: Cucuteni Museum (historical importance, no 4, figure 3); Ethnography Museum (no. 5, figure 3); Art Museum (no. 6, figure 3), give in addition complimentary perspectives amplifying the cultural potential of the historical area.

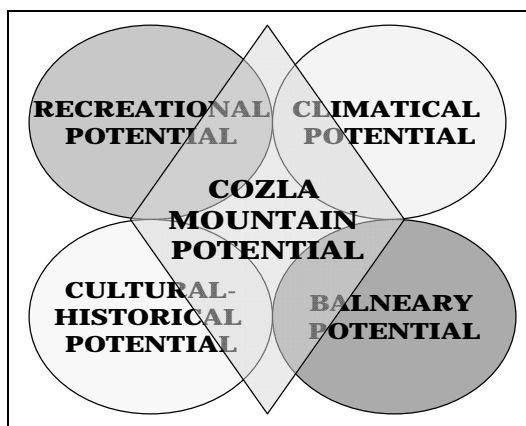
In the last years there was prepared the traveling path from Ștefan cel Mare Street to „Three Hollows” Rocks (blue line sign).

## **POSSIBILITIES IN CAPITALIZING THE TOURISTIC POTENTIAL**

### **Possibilities of practicing tourism in Cozla Mountain area**

The types of touristic potential indicate the way of valorizing them. The touristic potential of Cozla Mountain stands out an association of natural and anthropical elements, generating a distinct personality which can amplify the whole potential and can open unforeseeable perspectives if would be thought a strategy based on three essential elements: existent potential, integrated valorizing and economic efficiency.

Logically, the touristic potential of Cozla Mountain should be valorized tightly linked by the touristic potential of Piatra Neamț town and inside a wider strategy, but the aureole of that mountain confers a special place into the local strategy. The oneness of this mountain consists in the concentration of four different touristic potentials (figure 4): balneary (spa – due to those 5 mineral water springs), climatical, recreational (possibilities for traveling and practicing different sports), cultural-historical (presence of many cultural and historical objectives) supported also by the main advantage, accessibility due to its low altitude and close by the town.



**Figure 4.** Association of touristic potential types specific to Cozla Mountain

The capitalization of all possibilities deriving from the 4 types of touristic potential comes from their specific nature and from the ingenious manner of association of these for reciprocal potentiality. Thus, there can be distinguished 4 main types of tourism as possible to be practiced in Cozla Mountain area if there would be required endowment: balneary, climatical, sportive and traveling, cultural, but also there can be practiced some mixed types which come from the association of those: climatical-balneary, climatical and winter sports, traveling and amusement, etc. If there were proper endowment, mainly concerning the accommodation structures, there would have been extreme favorable

conditions for organizing: creation camps, ecological camps, paleontological and archaeological researching camps, sportive training camps, besides balneary and climatical treatment and practicing varied sports in some specialized resorts. As well, there are also possibilities for varying the business tourism and that linked with diverse sportive manifestations.

## CONCRET CAPITALIZATION OF THE TOURISTIC POTENTIAL

### Stages in capitalizing touristic potential of Cozla Mountain

The beginning of using the mineral waters for therapy was in 1883, when the local authorities decided a locally exploitation (commune administration) after they had refused a group of business men to make a big investment for a balneary resort (Bostan, 2008). Some years later, in 1890, there was recorded the first important moment of touristic connotation for the town, when there was conferred the title of balneary resort by the State Railways Direction, after local authorities had made applied for, but that rank fell down under a shadow because the helplessness and torpor of the authorities in efficient administration of those resources (Bostan, 2008).

Other important moment in the life of town happened in 1923, when Piatra Neamț was declared officially a touristic town as well for its charm also for its position on the crossing of some touristic ways, being a passage place for tourists towards some balneary resorts as Bălătești or Oglinzi, or even towards the monasteries close to Ceahlău area. That moment can be appreciated as a small success or a consolation after the town lost the rank of balneary resort (Hogea, 1936).

Recently, on May 2007, local authorities have been starting a new applying for declaring the town as touristic resort for national interest, but there is not any result until now.

Since 2005, local administration has been starting some brave projects to develop the touristic infrastructure of the town, many of them linked by fitting of Cozla Mountain for tourism.

The first stage was during 2005-2008 period, when there were implemented a set of projects for fitting of Cozla Mountain for tourism as a touristic infrastructure for transport and some sportive activities with a view to making it accessible and to capitalizing a segment of its potential, mainly for traveling and visiting the mountain and practicing winter sports. The 4 projects explained in the table 1 are interconnected and are the first try at present to develop the local tourism in Piatra Neamț, starting with Cozla Mountain area.

**Table 1.** The set of touristic projects of fitting for Cozla Mountain, implemented during 2005-2008

Sources: dates supplied on townhall website: [www.primariapn.ro](http://www.primariapn.ro)

| Implemented prjcts                   | Investment amount | Financing sources | Titular, administrator and project beneficiary |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--|
| TELEGONDOLA Project                  | 4,000,000 Euro    | Banking credit    | Piatra Neamț Townhall                          |
| TELECHAIR Project                    | 2,160,000 Euro    | Banking credit    | Piatra Neamț Townhall                          |
| SKI SLOPE + TUBING Project           | 710,000 Euro      | Banking credit    | Piatra Neamț Townhall                          |
| ARTIFICIAL SNOW INSTALLATION Project | 930,000 Euro      | Banking credit    | Piatra Neamț Townhall                          |
| TOTAL INVESTMENTS                    | 7,640,000 Euro    | Banking credit    | Piatra Neamț Townhall                          |

From the imagery point of view, the fulfillment of the first stage of Cozla Project that was a public image blow for local tourism and administration, but only the economic counts can express the efficiency of the investments. According to the statistical dates from Mayor Report concerning the economic activity during 2008, the society founded close to the townhall in order to administrate the investments and touristic infrastructure C.S. PERLA

INVEST L.R.S. (Comercial Society PERLA INVEST Limited Responsibility Society) reported at the end of financial year 2008, *“the cable transport installations, Tele gondola and Telechair have been transporting during the year 567,000 tourists (so-called), achieving an income over 3,2 millions RON”*, that means about 0,76 millions EURO (taking into account the parity 1 EURO = 4,2 RON), 2008 being a top year for local economy and tourism but also an inaugural year that touristic infrastructure on Cozla Mountain.

The logical approach concerning the investigation of the investments efficiency can continue with two questions:

1. What is the real economic profit for the administrative society and implicitly for the townhall and in the last for the community, besides the imagery capital?

2. Is there a small profit for the societies working in the local touristic industry, mainly for accomodation structures?

For counting the existence of a possible profit, should take into account: the collected amount in the top year (2008), investment amount, the credit conditions (time, instalments, bank interest) and expences for function and maintenance of installations. Even though the credit conditions aren't public information, it is easy to deduce from similar cases, where a banking credit for 20 years means to double the initial amount. If the whole collected amount (0,76 millions EURO) would be returned to the bank yearly, the whole loan could be paid back during 10 years, without paying bank interest, but adding the bank interest the period is doubled (20 years). Adding further more the expences for function and maintenance the amount or the time for returning can bear an increasing of about 25%. Thus, the paying off the whole investment needs about 20 years, while the profit of society is zero if the collected amount wouldn't rise, but that perspective is still too far in present conditions. Logically, according to present day dates, the society would function on profit after about 20 years. If townhall had contracted an unrepayable credit and it had to pay only its cofinancing part, after all expences, there would have been annually a small profit.

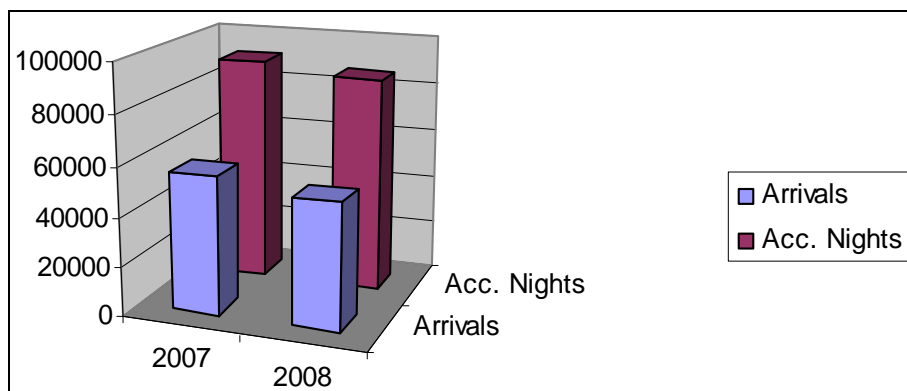
**Tabelul 2.** Quantitative analyse of some touristic indicators for 2007 and 2008 in Piatra Neamț town  
(Sources: dates supplied by Statistical Regional Direction of Neamț)

| Year        | Places number |      | Maximum accomodation capacity (no. places) x days |        | Arrivals |       | Accomodation nights |       | Degree of using accomodation capacity (%) |      |
|-------------|---------------|------|---|--------|----------|-------|---------------------|-------|---|------|
|             | 2007          | 2008 | 2007  | 2008   | 2007     | 2008  | 2007                | 2008  | 2007                                      | 2008 |
| Total       | 835           | 841  | 304775  | 307962 | 55992    | 50512 | 91118               | 86581 | 30,3                                      | 28,1 |
| Hotels      | 582           | 582  | 212430  | 213012 | 48499    | 41928 | 76431               | 68414 | 36,0                                      | 32,1 |
| Hostel      | 30            | 30   | 10950   | 10980  | 1003     | 1089  | 1204                | 1222  | 11,0                                      | 10,2 |
| Pupils camp | 140           | 140  | 51100   | 51240  | 3310     | 3672  | 8476                | 10803 | 16,5                                      | 21,1 |
| Pensions    | 83            | 89   | 30295   | 32730  | 3190     | 3823  | 5004                | 6245  | 16,5                                      | 19,1 |

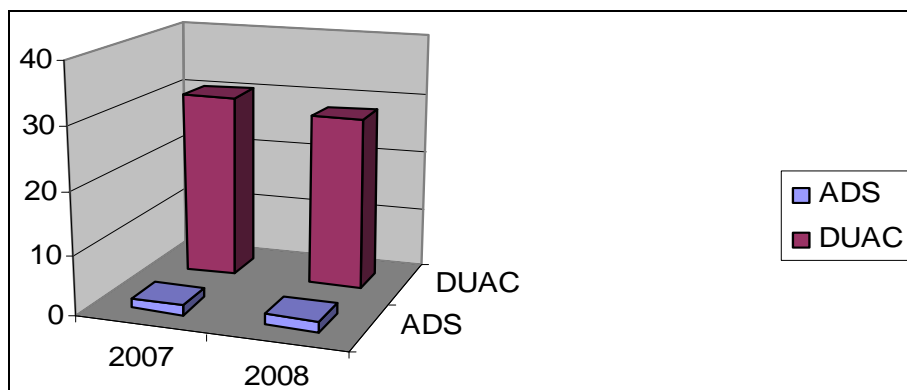
The answer for the second question can be detached from a comparative analyse of the statistical dates concerning to some touristic indicators for two consecutive years, 2007 and 2008, in order to observe a possible increasing of touristic fluxes in 2008, the year of inauguration of touristic infrastructure on Cozla Mountain. According to the indicators in table 2, there is a decreasing of the levels since 2007 to 2008, of: number of arrivals, number of accomodation nights, degree of using accomodation capacity and one small increasing of the average duration of staying (from 1,6 in 2007 to 1,7 in 2008) (figure 5 and 6). Before to draw a conclusion, there is necessary to specify that, according to EUROSTAT Directive 95/57/European Commission from 23 November 1995, there is a distinction between a tourist and an excursionist or visitor, a tourist is a person who is hosted at least a night at an accomodation structure, while an excursionist or visitor is a person who is not hosted at least a night at an accomodation structure.



Observing that the three indicators are decreasing during 2007-2008 period, a very simple reasoning can help us to understand that Cozla Project (meaning the sum of the 4 projects detailed above) couldn't attract neither one tourist, and those 567,000 reported persons are only excursionists/visitors or local persons who used the cable installations for curiosity.



**Figure 5.** Quantitative analyse of touristic indicators: Arrivals and Accommodation Nights (Acc. Nights) in Piatra Neamț town during 2007 - 2008



**Figure 6.** Quantitative analyse of touristic indicators: Average duration staying (ADS) and Degree of using accommodation capacity (DUAC) in Piatra Neamț town during 2007-2008

This quantitative analysis leads us to word as a partial conclusion that, the Cozla Project is only a segment inside a long process and the first stage (2005-2008) in developing the touristic infrastructure in Cozla Mountain area is only a try because this achievement can't attract tourists by itself but only excursionists or occasional visitors.

## PROSPECTS

### Prospects for touristic development in Cozla Mountain area

In this study vision, there are two opposite perspectives in touristic developing process in Cozla Mountain area and generally for whole town of Piatra Neamț:

1. Local administration perspective;
2. Present study perspective.

Local administration perspective marches on the same approach, taking into account to continue the development of transport and amusement infrastructure in Cozla Mountain area, as if that by itself would magnitize tourists and automatically increase the touristic flux towards Piatra Neamț. This intention is revealed in the projects portfolio

for local tourism for 2010-2013 period, from that present study selected the only projects linked with Cozla Mountain. The analyse of table 3 leads to the following observation for the stage 2010-2013:

- Registration of a progress concerning to the financing sources directed to structural European funds;
- Existence of real preoccupations for developing and valorizing the historical and cultural patrimony;
- Persistence into a limited vision upon the tourism phenomenon, thinking that the only transport and amusement infrastructure is sufficient for tourism development.

**Table 3.** Portofolio of projects for touristic development in Cozla Mountain area during 2010-2013  
(Sources: dates supplied by Townhall of Piatra Neamt)

| <b>Project title</b>   | <b>Financing sources</b> | <b>Implementation duration</b> | <b>Project amount (Euro)</b> | <b>Cofinancing beneficiary (%)</b> | <b>Cofinancing beneficiary (Euro)</b> |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Development of touristic infrastructure in Cozla Mountain area               | Structural funds OPR     | 36 months                      | 8 000 000                    | 2                                  | 160 000                               |
| Bulding the hung tram between Cozla and Pietricica Mountains                 | Structural funds OPR     | 36 months                      | 7 000 000                    | 2                                  | 140 000                               |
| Restoration and valorizing the historical and cultural area „Princely Court” | Structural funds OPR     | 36 months                      | 5 585 000                    | 2                                  | 111 700                               |

Present study perspective proposes an equal capitalization of all the 4 types of touristic potential existent in Cozla Mountain area, trying an integrated approach, giving priority to the development of balneary and climatical structures, which by themselves power can attract tourists and the transport and amusement infrastructures should be complementary developed. The existence of some solid bases for accomodation and balneary-climatical treatment would assure a permanent and constant flux of tourists, and futher more during the stay, they should profit by the transport and amusement infrastrucure in Cozla Mountain area as a way of diversification the touristic tender.

## CONCLUSIONS

When a local administration contracts banking credits for investing in achieving some transport and amusement infrastructures, generating a financial obligation for community for about 20 years without having any profit during this time, neglecting to draw and stimulate private investments in this field, it can be easily thought as an unwise investment. If this mistake is accompanied by projects for developing other segments of transport and amusement infrastructure neglecting to conduct the financial resources to develop accomodation and treatment bases which only can capitalize totally and efficiently the balneary and climatical potential of Cozla Mountain which really can attract a permanent and constant flux of tourists in town area, logically the next questions arise themselves:

The first stage of Cozla Project was an imagery exercise having an electoral substratum or it was simply ignorance in investing public money? The investments almost only in transport and amusement infrastructure, even though there is desired the town to become a touristic resort, is also a proof of ignorance or indolence, or something else!?

Taking into account the variant of ignorance, present study proposes the following priorities concerning the idea of a reasonable and efficient capitalization of the rich touristic potential of Cozla Mountain and entirely of Piatra Neamț town:

1. Political and administrative will have to be allways accompanied and substantiated by scientific knowledge, otherway that can generate anomalies and great casualties for the community hardly to remedy later;

2. Necessity to draw with priority of private investments for the projects of local touristic development because the private factor represents the key of economic progress due to its dynamism and adaptability opposite to public factor;

3. Avoidance of involving some public financial resources in far-reaching investments for productive purpose or for exploitation of a local potential, because in this case, the local administration transfers its administrative role to a productive one, generating public suspicions about a reasonable and sustainable administration of local public patrimony.

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