

County road 713, Braşov or ‘Babele’ road

The case

Braşov city, county town of Braşov, was originally attested in the year 1235 under the name of Corona (Latin for crown) and since then it is known as one of the most important, powerful and blooming cities in the country. Because of the geographical position and its infrastructure, it allows the development of many economical, cultural, sport and tourism activities.

Braşov county is situated north of Făgăraş Depression and Braşov Depression, north-west of Târnavelor Plateau and south of Bucegi Mountains, Piatra Craiului Mountains, Postăvaru Mountains and a part of Întorsura Buzăului Mountains.



In the mountains of Bucegi in 1990 was founded the Bucegi Natural Reserve intended to protect several species of plants like wild thyme, edelweiss, forget-me-not, mountain pine, fir, and animal species, such as brown bear, lynx, deer, chamois, golden eagle, raven, red mountain ant, as well as to protect natural monuments in the area: Babele, the Sphinx, Arcada of Gaura Valley.

County road 713 (DJ713) transits Prahova and Dâmboviţa counties and has the range comprised between Sinaia Resort and Piatra Arsă (Burned Stone) Plateau from National Park Bucegi. The County Council Prahova, in partnership with County Council Dâmboviţa have promoted a feasibility study, whose main purpose is to improve the current situation of infrastructure in the area of Bucegi Mountains Plateau for the development of mountain tourism.

The change progress

In the beginning, the feasibility study faced several problems, because the topographic measurements pertaining to the study resulted in discrepancies referring to the length and layout of the road sectors. To remedy the resulting situation, the Prahova Regional Council adopted Decision 81/2009, which modified the length and layout of the DJ 713 (Regional Road 713).

Although the Regional Councils of Prahova and Dâmboviţa present the construction of this road as a necessity of mountain tourism development, ulterior research has brought evidence that the Democratic Liberal Party, PDL, in Târgovişte has in fact planned a series of changes, ‘beneficial’ to mountain tourism: ski trails, asphaltting the road DJ714 Padina-Peştera. Moreover, when asphaltting the road DJ713 (also known as ‘Babelor’/‘The old women’ Road) began, the Dâmboviţa Regional Council was initiating two more projects (‘Reconditioning

the signaling system on mountain tracks' and 'Building and rehabilitation of cabins, mountain refuges and Salvamont bases'), which have as final purpose the construction of a heliport, a camping area, and three cabins - one of them being situated right on 'Babelor' Road.

The Association 'Mișcarea de Rezistență' (The Resistance Movement Association), together with 'Jurnalul Național' (The National Journal), in the wake of some ample research, consider that finalizing the road DJ 713 not only will destroy the Bucegi plateau's natural landscape, and make Bucegi Natural Reserve look less and less like a natural reserve, but also gives the green light to various countless real estate constructions.

Spokespersons of Bucegi Natural Reserve's Scientific Council have pointed out countless times the impact on the environment. 'The Scientific Council could only give a notice of rule, because now, after the legislation change, the Environmental Protection Agency is the one issuing the final notice. Moreover, now there even is no need for issuing a notice of rule anymore for implementing projects in Bucegi Natural Park' says Cristian Goran, president of the Bucegi Natural Park's Scientific Council.

Another institution actively involved in contesting the undertaking of the DJ 713 asphaltting is the Romanian Natura 2000 NGOs' Coalition. The Coalition is supported by many associations, such as The Resistance Movement Association and WWF. Member organizations from the Coalition have already started collecting information in order to fill the infringement file which will be sent to the European Union in the shortest time possible. 'The Natura 2000 NGOs' Coalition started from the summer of 2010 the undertakings for gathering the data for the infringement file in the case 'Bucegi sit Natura 2000'. Based on the evaluation results, it should be seen if the habitats and/or the species for which the site was designated would be affected, and appropriate measures will be taken, even stopping the investment' states the bulletin of the Coalition.

Of course, all these undertakings also found an echo among ordinary citizens. Environment lovers are dissatisfied with these investments through which the natural area protected by the European legislation is destroyed.

The outcome

Although the spokespersons of the Scientific Council have pointed out the impact on the environment, the population is displeased with this project, the environmental impact assessment report states that these works would have a negative impact on the environment, the asphaltting and modernizing works of DJ 713 are considered legal. Governors changed the legislation so that the opinion of the



park's administration and the Scientific Council wouldn't matter anymore.

The road was built, and scarcely a few months after its modernization, governors and investors found themselves forced to repair it again. The population, from whose money DJ 713 was modernized, is dissatisfied not only by the park's destruction, but also because of the holes and poorly executed patchwork.

Lessons learned

Romanians don't have highways, but they will have roads up to the top of the mountains.

'The road, which is considered to be restored, DJ 713, was initially a road designed for special terrain vehicles, on which materials necessary for the construction of the Costila Aerial were transported. This was happening in the 1960s. The huts from the Piatra Arsa area were getting supplies thanks to this road. The road is in a very high state of degradation. Ideally would have been for this road to remain paved. I do not see the purpose of these investments. It is a road that leads to nowhere. It doesn't even lead to Cabana Babele or the touristic complex of Piatra Arsă. The bet could be the terrains on the sides of the roads, because they are owned by people, they are in the construction area, so people can raise buildings there', says Cristian Goran, the president of the Scientific Council of Natural Park Bucegi.