

# The Inventory of the Objectives Bucharest Fortification Belt for Tourism Arranging Purposes

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## ABSTRACT

Built over 100 years ago, at the initiative of King Carol I, the belt of fortifications of the Romanian capital, a remarkable achievement of the national military architecture, has currently reached an advanced state of decay.

The analysis of successful European models (Hollandse Nieuwe Waterlinie forts of Utrecht - Holland, Vesting Antwerpen line - Belgium or fortified line of Essex - United Kingdom) demonstrates that such objectives can be successfully converted into museums, cultural centres, urban parks, recreation centres or even accommodation units, with a great potential in this regard.

Their tourist arrangement is required both to stop degradation of valuable cultural-historical objectives (recently classified as historical monuments) and to diversify the out of town cultural recreational opportunities, in order to strengthen one of the most important and fastest growing national tourist destination.

This material proposes an inventory of the fortified objectives around Bucharest, to identify those that are best suited to be arranged for tourism.

## KEYWORDS

Fortifications, Tourism arrangement, Inventory Bucharest for the forts, Cultural entertainment.

## JEL Classification

N94, O31, R14.

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## Introduction

Each country is remarked by its own history and culture and from this symbiosis can appear special cultural assets which can be capitalised through tourist activities. Romania, lying for centuries in the crossroads of some strong empires, had to act differently from a historic period to another in order to protect its own independence and suzerainty. Some historic events connected to some armed conflicts in the Balkans area determined the building of some military function buildings.

In this category some important fortifications created around Bucharest are included, which became after the Unification in 1859, the capital of the Romanian Principalities. During 1866-1882, in Europe the independence movements of the small countries get intensified and the crisis between the Ottoman Empire and the Romanian Principalities is intensified. Consequently, the preoccupations to defend the borders and also the peripheral area of the capital will intensify. The king Carol I initiated the building of a fortification system for the Bucharest municipality at the end of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century (after the Independence War ended).<sup>2</sup>

Consequently, in 1882 a commission was created by the general Gh. Manu (1833-1911) with a view to implement this system. But the Romanian officers' and engineers' lack of experience in the military

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<sup>2</sup> Vasiliu D.I. (1934), Studies and documents about the Romanian fortifications in the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, *vol I*, „Revista Geniului” printing works, București

building field leads to bringing foreign specialists. Carol I King (1839-1914) will ask for support from Henri Alexis Brialmont (1821-1903), the highest contemporary authority in the art of fortifications, author of some similar works in Anvers and Liege.<sup>3</sup> In 1883, the first funds for fortifications are approved and the effective building is started in 1884. The whole fortifications line was built between 1884 -1894 and, at that time, the fortification system around the capital was one of the best in Europe.

## 1. The general characteristics of the fortifications system

The fortifications system of the Bucharest municipality was composed of 18 forts and 18 intermediary batteries, all constituted in conformity with the system of support points with double action and developed on an area of 72 km. The distance between a fort and an intermediary battery is about 2 km, which means a cannon area of action of 57 mm. The small diameter of the forts 'belt' was of 21,5 km (between the Afumati and Magurele forts) and the large diameter of 27 km (between the Chitila fort and Leordeni one). The plan created by Brialmont divided the belt in 3 sectors of which the southern one was the least protected, as they considered that it was the least exposed to an attack.<sup>4</sup> The irony was such that this part was attacked by the German army which occupied Romania in 1916 (the fortifications belt had been anyway out of order).

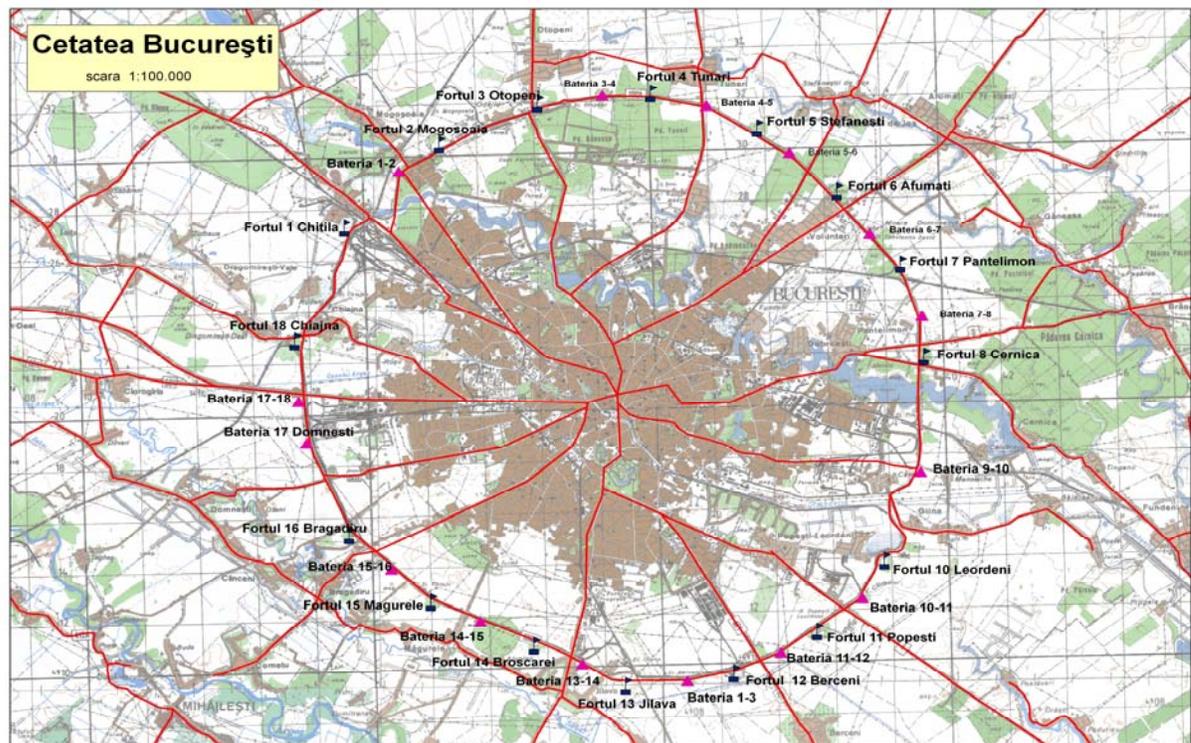


Fig. 1 The position of the forts and batteries around Bucharest

The line of the forts was doubled to 100 m towards the inside by a road and a railway, with an important role in supplying the forts. The works were started on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1884 and finalised 10 years

<sup>3</sup> Herjeu C. N. (1902) *The history of the genius' gun*, Editura I. V. Socecu, București

<sup>4</sup> Scafeș C., Scafeș I. (2008), *The Bucharest citadel – The fortifications around the capital*, the Alpha MDN publishing house, București

later. The total costs for the finalisation of the works cost 111.5 million lei gold, which meant three times the annual budget of the Romanian Army during that period.

Despite the efforts made in order to finalise the works, the fortifications around Bucharest would never be used in an armed conflict. Some time before Romania entered the First World War, the internal affairs minister, Ionel C. Bratianu (1864-1927), internal affairs minister between 1914-1916 and in 1922, issued a decree for the un-cocking of the fortifications. During the years these were realised, the guns evolved a lot and the ray of action of the cannons had risen so much that the centre of the city could be bombed from further than the fortifications.

During the inter-war period, the fortifications remained in the army patrimony and were used for barracks and dumps. After 1989, some of the lands where the forts lay entered into private administration, with different employments: Fort 12 Berceni is the REMAT Sud headquarters, Fort 18 Chiajna has been till recently a warehouse for tins, Fort 2 Mogosoia has been transformed in a mushroom farm, Battery 10-11 has been used as a warehouse for building materials, Battery 14-15, close to the "Horia Hulubei" National Institute of Research and Development for Physics and Nuclear Engineering from Magurele, stored radioactive waste, Battery 13-14 is used by the Movies National Archive as a warehouse for quashed movies and four batteries and a fort have been partially or completely destroyed because of some explosions of munitions deposits.<sup>5</sup>

Currently, the Ministry of Culture and National Patrimony, at the demand of the Patrimony National Institute, has started the procedure of stopping the Bucharest fortification complex as a historic monument. Consequently, the local public administration authorities which are territorially competent will demand the notice of the Ministry of Culture and National Patrimony for any intervention with these goods and the owners/administrators of these buildings have the obligations mentioned in the law.

## **2. The opportunity of the tourism capitalisation of these historic objectives**

The National Institute of Research Development in Tourism has realised a detailed research in order to evaluate the possibility of capitalization in tourism of some fortifications in the existent system around the capital. This included a bibliographic documentation and a field one, in order to see the current situation.

Although representing an important component of the historic cultural patrimony, this remarkable realization of the Romanian military architecture, comparable, at the finalization moment, with other fortifications in the epoch like those in Austro-Hungary, Belgium, Italy, France, Germany, Russia, the whole fortifications belt of the Bucharest municipality has been completely ignored till recently.

Mostly, the lack of an adequate maintenance together with the inundation following the rise of the phreatic water level, has led to the intense degradation of several objectives.

Besides their historic significance, the forts represent also an important potential for territory planning. The area which can be built in Bucharest is extended and if during the XIX<sup>th</sup> century the fortified line lies at a 8 km distance from the city limits, now there are real chances that some forts be included in the urban space. The role of the forts must be reconsidered fundamentally, capitalising their cultural, educative, tourist, economic potential, etc. which can contribute in a great measure to the local and regional development.

The tourist designing of these fortifications is necessary both for stopping the degradation of a valuable cultural-historic objective (recently stopped as a historic monument) but also for the diversification of the cultural recreational possibilities outside the town (over 1,000,000 tourists and

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<sup>5</sup> Idem, 7.

about 2,000,000 overnights). Also, the attraction force of such a tourist place is doubled by the small distance to the capital of Romania, a city with 2,000,000 inhabitants.<sup>6</sup>

The analysis of some known European models (the forts on the Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie in Utrecht – Holland, the Vesting Antwerp line in Anvers – Belgium or the fortified line in Essex – Great Britain) demonstrates that such objectives can be successfully transformed into museums, cultural centres, urban parks, recreational centres or even accommodation units, with a special potential in this aspect.<sup>7</sup>

Due to the cultural-historic resources, to which are added the natural conditions, the periurban area of the Bucharest municipality contributes to the rise of the level of the Romanian capital attractiveness, having an essential role in the development of week-end tourism, representing the place for many daily trips.

The tourist equipping of this area is favoured by the easy accessibility (in the neighbourhood lie the railway and the surrounding highroad and these attractions lie at a small distance to the town centre). More than that, the reduction of the working week and the rise of the population's education level are important factors which have determined a rise for the demand of week-end trips outside the town and the most important is the wish to know and interact culturally.

The opportunity of creating some investments for the tourist design of the fortifications around Bucharest is also given by the positive impact and the benefits they can bring. The weak endowments level of the current facility together with the unequal distribution of these in relation to the town leads to an over-solicitation during the season and especially the week-end days. Consequently, the designing of some military attractions inside the fortifications system of the Bucharest municipality and their introduction in the tourist circuit will lead to the **diversification of the cultural recreation possibilities** in the peri-urban area and these can represent a space for a day visit for the Bucharest tourists and for the week-end getaways for the city inhabitants.

In this context, this effort would contribute to the creation of a new tourist product and the formation of a competitive tourist destination on the national and international plan.

More than that, the rehabilitation and tourist capitalisation of these will contribute fully to the salvation from degradation of some attractions of the capital fortifications system. Still inside the positive effects could also be mentioned the creation of new workplaces, rise of the income for the local budgets and the multiplying effect which it could have on other sector and activity fields, such as tourism, transport, trade, etc.

In this context, the Ministry of Regional development and tourism has identified the opportunity of tourist and cultural capitalisation of these, initiating a research development project through which the fortifications which are best fit for such a design would be identified and the technical-economic documents for two pilot attractions would be created, documents which would be the basis of a future financing.<sup>8</sup>

### 3. The evaluation of the tourist value historic attractions

The evaluation of the attractions which are best fit for a tourist capitalisation will be done taking into account a series of criteria such as:

- the juridical status of the attraction;
- the technical status of this;
- accessibility and complementarity with other tourist attractions nearby;

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<sup>6</sup>Evaluations extracted from the study carried out by INCDT, in 2011, at the demand of the corresponding ministry (cord. Doru Tudorache)

<sup>7</sup> The report of the „Crossing the lines” project, INTERREG IIIIB NWE, pg. 1-55

<sup>8</sup> The whole study included a documentation carried out by INCDT, for 5 months.

- the historic value of the attraction.

Determining the juridical status of these attractions and setting up ways through which these could be capitalised in tourism has been done after the discussions with the representatives of the National defence ministry (UM 02523, the Fields and Infrastructures department), the Administration and internal affairs ministry (the National administration of the state reserve and special problems – territorial structure for special problems Ilfov county), the town-halls on whose areas are located these fortifications and with representatives of the institutions that administrate the respective attractions. Following the discussions and answers, the following attractions categories have been identified and, attached to these, modalities to capitalise them:

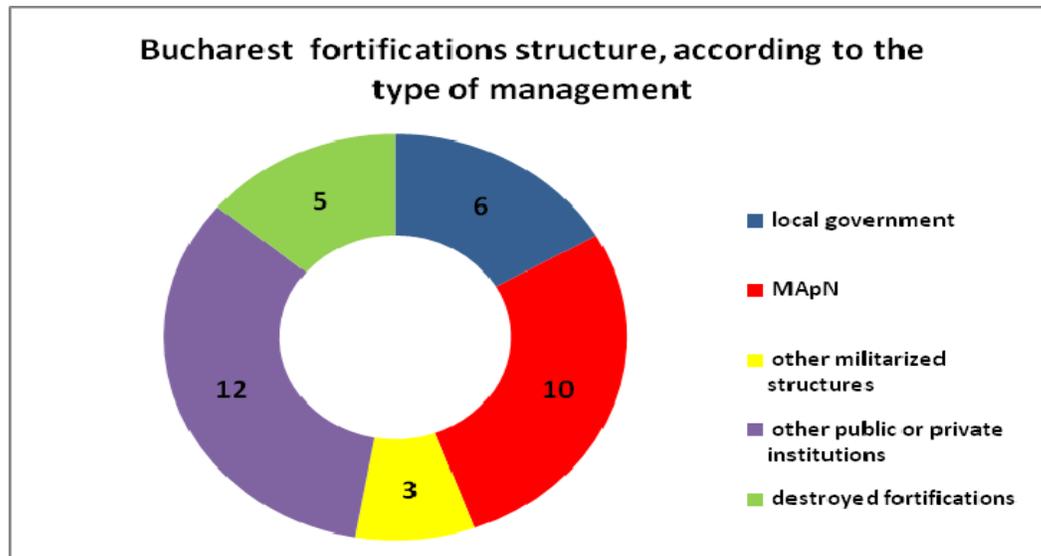


Fig. 2 The current system of administrating the fortifications around the capital (2011)

Attractions which are administered by the local public authority and which could be capitalised through a partnership with the Regional development and tourism ministry are: Battery 6-7 (the town-hall of the Dobroiesti locality is in litigation with a private company for the land on which the battery lies); battery 9-10 (the representatives of the Glina locality town-hall have declared that they do not wish to collaborate in this project); Fort 10 Leordeni (has been leased by the town-hall of the Popesti Leordeni locality for 49 years by SC Biant Construction SRL. The town-hall wishes to cancel the contract, as this firm has not respected the contract); Battery 15-16 (the representatives of the Bragadiru town-hall do not know that they administrate this battery); battery 17-18 and fort 18 (the town-hall of the Chiajna locality has not given any answer concerning such a partnership, more than that, related to the fort there is a litigation with a private company for the land on which is located).

This first option (partnership with the local public authorities) has pretty low chances of success. This is due to a complicated juridical situation in which are the fortifications administered by the town-halls and to the lack of reaction of the local public authorities who in general do not wish to collaborate in such a project.

Attractions which could be capitalised through a partnership between the Regional development and tourism ministry and the National defence ministry. From the discussions with the National defence ministry representatives, they appreciate that, of the 10 fortifications located in the army administration, those which are the easiest to use for a tourist capitalisation are Battery 1-2 (with a shooting range nearby), fort 14 Broscarei (ammunition storehouse on the land nearby), fort 16

Bragadiru (instruction and training basis). The others, being operational military units, some of strategic importance, are hard to re-convert at this moment.

Attractions which could be capitalised through a partnership between their current administrators (others than National Defense Ministry) and the Regional development and tourism ministry: fort 13 Jilava (in partnership with the Penitentiary national administration, institution in subordination to the Justice ministry. This institution wishes to transform fort 13 Jilava in a memorial museum) and battery 11-12 (administered by MIOTUR SRL, company which owns a tourist complex on the land nearby).

Attractions being administered by other private or state institutions and which could be capitalised by passing into the administration of the Regional development and tourism ministry, through a Government decision: fort 1 Chitila (administered currently by SC Zarea 1912 SA<sup>9</sup> and SC Faber SA); fort 2 Mogosoaia (administered by the Institute of research development for vegetable and flower growing Vidra); fort 3 Otopeni (administered by SC Zarea 1912 SA and SC Faber SA); battery 4-5 (administered by SC PRODPLAST Imobiliare SA); fort 6 Afumati (administered by SC ROMVAC Company); battery 10-11 (administered by the Roman-Catholic archiepiscopate – the church does not want to capitalise the battery for tourism); battery 13-14 (administered by the National Movie archive); battery 14-15 (administered by IFIN “Horia Hulubei”).

Attractions that cannot or are not recommended to be capitalised at present: fort 4 Tunari, fort 5 Stefanesti, battery 5-6, fort 7 Pantelimon, battery 7-8, fort 17 Domnesti (operational units of the National Defence Ministry); battery 12-13 (administered by the National Defence Ministry, is to be given to the Ilfov county council, which wishes to create a recycling centre); fort 15 Magurele (operational unit of the Administration and Internal Affairs Ministry – the General department of gendarmes of the Bucharest municipality); fort 11 Popesti locality (operational unit of the Protection service).<sup>10</sup>

Currently, most of the forts and batteries are abandoned. Some of them have been turned into shooting ranges for guns or testing explosives. Other fortifications are located on private properties and cannot be visited. A single battery has been turned into a recreational centre but functions with closed circuit.

Concerning the technical condition, we can say that most of these objectives are in an advanced stage of degradation. The main factors that contributed over time to the damage or even destruction of some of these fortifications were: water, condensation, businesses, malicious visitors, explosions, etc

Water (from rain, melting snow or groundwater) and condensation are important issues for most of these objectives because the drainage and ventilation systems are ineffective. Therefore, some of these fortifications have from time to time some of the communication galleries and rooms flooded.

Battery 3-4 located near Otopeni town, is perhaps the most affected in this regard, the water bogs here all year, blocking the coil/. Fort 1 Chitila, fort 3 Otopeni (the ditch and rooms of the flooded redoubt), Fort 6 Afumați, Fort 14 Broscărei, battery 4-5, battery 11-12, battery 13-14 or battery 17-18 have had floods problems over time. On the other hand, there are specific targets (Battery 1-2, Fort 11 Popesti or Fort 13 Jilava) that were used during certain critical periods for pumps to remove water from inside.

Human activities are those that in time and space have contributed to the deterioration and degradation of these fortifications, some of them irreversibly, visible aspects in the following historic sites: Fort 6 Afumați (the companies around the fortification have ‘stolen’ of the ditches land and more than one quarter of the original fort area is compromised), fort 12 Berceni (the REMAT SUD Bucharest headquarters fort is affected due to the economic activity and residual waste stored here); battery 9-10 (the battery is affected by the construction of the A2 motorway ‘straps’); within the battery 14-15 have been deposited radioactive materials over time (even if the space was ecologised, it seems that the radiations did not disappear entirely), an important part of the land of the battery 17-18 was incorporated in the company located nearby; within fort 6 Afumați, fort 10 Leordeni, fort 13 Jilava, fort 17 Domnesti or battery 10-11, some interior partitions have been made and in other cases some

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<sup>9</sup> SA = Corporation.

<sup>10</sup> data supplied by the Internal Affairs ministry and the National Defence Ministry, 2011, Bucharest.

additional buildings have been done in total contradiction with the first architectural style (fortunately without affecting the structure of resistance) - battery 10-11.

Destroying activities following the presence of bad visitors, through which some forts suffered: battery 9-10 is full of residues and the interior walls are destroyed and coloured with graffiti; fort 6 Afumati, battery 3-4 and battery 14-15 have the interior walls smoked.

A series of objectives have been totally or partially destroyed due to the explosions of the ammunition shops: fort 9 Catelu, battery 2-3, battery 8-9, battery 16-17, battery 18-19 and even fort 8 Cernica.

Totally opposite are some objectives administered by the National defence ministry (e.g. battery 1-2, fort 5 Stefanesti, fort 14 Broscarei, fort 16 Bragadiru), the Justice ministry (fort 13 Jilava) or other institutions (e.g. fort Mogosoia), attractions which have enjoyed a better care, being in a good or very good technical status. A special prize would be for the battery 5-6 (the National defence ministry), the only one restored and designed, but not accessible to the public (with closed circuit).

From the point of view of the accessibility and complementarity with other tourist attractions, the fortifications in the north of Bucharest have the advantage of being located close to some important attractions and in this area the Bucharest surrounding Highway has already been widened. Of the fortifications here, these have the best position: battery 1-2, located close to the crossroads between the surrounding Highway with DN 1A, can be combined with the tourist attractions in the area (the Mogosoia Palace, the Stirbei Palace in Buftea town); fort 3 Otopeni town, located close to the intersection between the surrounding Highway and DN1 can be included in a circuit with the tourist attractions in the Snagov area.

Another traditional area used by the Bucharest inhabitants for spending their free time is the east of the capital (the Cernica – Pașărea – Pustnicu area). The most accessible fortifications here are: battery 9-10, situated at the intersection with Highway A2 (being visible from the highway) and at only 2 km from the Anghel Saligny metro station and fort 8 Cernica, located between the intersection with the Cernica road and the intersection with the Biruintei boulevard. These could be easily introduced in a tourist circuit with the tourist attractions in the area (the Cernica monastery and the Pasarea monastery).

The south area of the capital is less known and visited by Bucharest inhabitants, still the presence at only 30 km of the Comana natural park and the Comana monastery as well as the restoration of the Oteteleşanu Palace (Magurele locality) and their introduction in the tourist circuit offers in this area, too, perspectives for the creation of a new tourism development location. Also, the fortifications lying in the west part are pretty far from the traditional tourist areas, to this adding that the vehicle flow on the Surrounding highway in this location is not very good.<sup>11</sup>

The greatest historic value belongs to the fort 13 Jilava. Its importance is given by the fact that it is included in the fortifications belt of the Bucharest municipality (was used as an ammunition storehouse and a military garrison till 1907) and the fact that after 1907 it was turned into a politic prison.

Here were 'kept' for the first time the peasants of the 1907 revolution; between 1921 and 1944 were imprisoned politic members of the Communist party, which became illegal in 1924; in the night 25-26 November 1940, were shot 64 opponents of the Iron guard movement and in 1946, in fort 13 stayed a politic group which included marshal Ion Antonescu, the external affairs minister Mihai Antonescu, general Constantin Pantazi, the Special information department chief Eugen Cristescu etc. On the 1<sup>st</sup> June 1946 a part of this group was executed in Valea Piersicilor (Valley of Peaches), close to the fort.

Between 1948 and 1964, fort 13 was a transit prison for the anti-communist prisoners. Disintegrated between 1973-1980, fort 13 Jilava was once more used by the Security in the night 21-22 December 1989 when some young revolutionaries were brought here.

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<sup>11</sup> aspects noticed after the analysis on the land, 2011

## Conclusions

Putting in balance both the positive and negative aspects, one can appreciate that, currently, the attractions which are best fit to be re-designed and enter the tourist circuit are:

**a) Battery 1-2** – it could be re-designed in partnership with the National defence ministry (the Ferdinand I national military museum). Arguments which support this attraction are: the good location close to the Mogosoaia palace, the good technical status and the wish to collaborate of the National Defence Ministry

for such a partnership.

Capitalising battery 1-2 will contribute to the creation of a really attractive, tourist pole' in the north peri-urban area of the capital (Mogoșoaia - Buftea - Snagov) by combining some supplementary tourist resources (religious patrimony, civilian patrimony, military patrimony, natural patrimony), known (for example: the Mogosoaia Palace, the Stirbei Palace - Buftea town ) with other less known and not capitalised till now (the military fortifications in the north of the capital) where the cultural aspect is essential.

They have in view doing some restoration works, organising inside the battery a permanent exposition with the theme – Bucharest Fortification belt, some spaces for temporary expositions, a souvenir shop, a projection hall and a café. Also, they will take into consideration the landscape design of the exterior of the battery while the land belonging to the fortification could become a theme park. In front of the hinder part, an exposition in the open air with artillery pieces that belonged to the Bucharest citadel will be created.

**b) Fort 13 Jilava** – could be designed in partnership with the Justice ministry (the National Administration of Penitentiaries). Arguments that support this location are: the historic value of the fort, the very good status and the wish to collaborate of those in the National administration of penitentiaries.

The fort could be designed as a memorial museum. In this case, they think of doing some restoration works, designing some theme cells (enquiry room, isolation room, etc.), designing a projection hall where specific documentary movies will be broadcasted, creating some permanent and temporary expositions, etc. In order not to disturb the activity of the penitentiary, a separate access will be created.

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