

## **AZUGA – URBAN LANDSCAPE**

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### **Abstract**

*Azuga city is an interesting example of urban settlement which is in an interdependent relationship with the surrounding landscape. Our study aims to reveal the anthropic landscape and is part of the substantiation studies necessary as base for the general urban plan of the city. The analysis of typologies of buildings reveals a great diversity of the landscapes, relative to the scale of the city. This feature of the city Azuga requires valorization criteria different from those characteristic to the historical protected areas, in order to preserve specific local identity. Based on place and collective memory, these particularities are required both for the community, to identify itself through a specific built framework, and, for the town, to promote its uniqueness. We must emphasize these features regarding the future development of Azuga city and it is therefore important to know and to value them. Landscape studies became the new approach in elaborating the necessary substantiation studies of cities general urban planning and became mandatory during the last decade. Our study is original and it is the first of this kind made for the city of Azuga.*

### **Rezumat**

*Orașul Azuga constituie un exemplu interesant de cadru urban aflat într-o relație de interdependență cu relieful înconjurător. Studiul nostru urmărește relevarea peisajului antropic și face parte din studiile de fundamentare care stau la baza proiectului de plan urbanistic general al orașului. Analiza tipologiilor construite relevă o mare diversitate de peisaje antropice, raportat la scara orașului. Această caracteristică a orașului Azuga impune criterii de valorificare diferite de cele caracteristice zonelor protejate istorice, în scopul păstrării identității locale specifice. Bazate pe memoria locului și memoria colectivă, aceste particularizări sunt necesare atât unei comunități - ca să se identifice printr-un cadru construit specific, cât și orașului pentru a-și promova unicitatea. Trebuie să subliniem aceste caracteristici în dezvoltarea viitoare a orașului Azuga și de aceea este important să le cunoaștem și să le apreciem. Studiile de peisaj constituie o abordare nouă în cadrul studiilor de fundamentare necesare elaborării planurilor urbanistice generale ale orașelor, și au devenit obligatorii în ultimul deceniu, iar studiul nostru are un caracter de originalitate, fiind primul de acest fel făcut pentru orașul Azuga.*

**Keywords:** urban landscape, anthropic landscape, substantiation studies, local identity, typology of buildings, historical protected area, place and collective memory.

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## 1. Introduction.

Our paper presents an excerpt from the landscape study elaborated for the city of Azuga as substantiation study for the general urban plan (PUG), with reference to the anthropic landscape. Main purposes of the substantiation of the landscape studies, according to the European Landscape Charter, are:

- to identify landscapes throughout its territory; - to analyze the landscape characteristics, its dynamics and disturbing factors; - to analyze the landscape changes;
- to assess the landscapes thus identified, taking into account the particular values assigned to them by different interested parties and the population concerned.

The objectives of the substantiation study of landscape are:

- the integration of the city into the landscape to macro-territorial level;
- the protection, rehabilitation and enhancement of natural heritage represented by green areas in connection with the ecosystems of the territory;
- to distribute efficiently activities in the city, in agreement with the spatial and functional city;
- to identify the urban landscape image, to keep and to enhance it (to recognize the landscape from the legislation point of view, both as an essential component of the quality of life of the population, as an expression of the diversity of the cultural and natural patrimony, and as the foundation of its identity).

## 2. Context and short history of Azuga.

The location of city is in the far north of the county Prahova, in the context of proximity relief of Baiului mountains (also called Gârbova Mountains) - part of the Curvature Carpathians, situated in their west part, and at the confluence of rivers Azuga and Prahova.

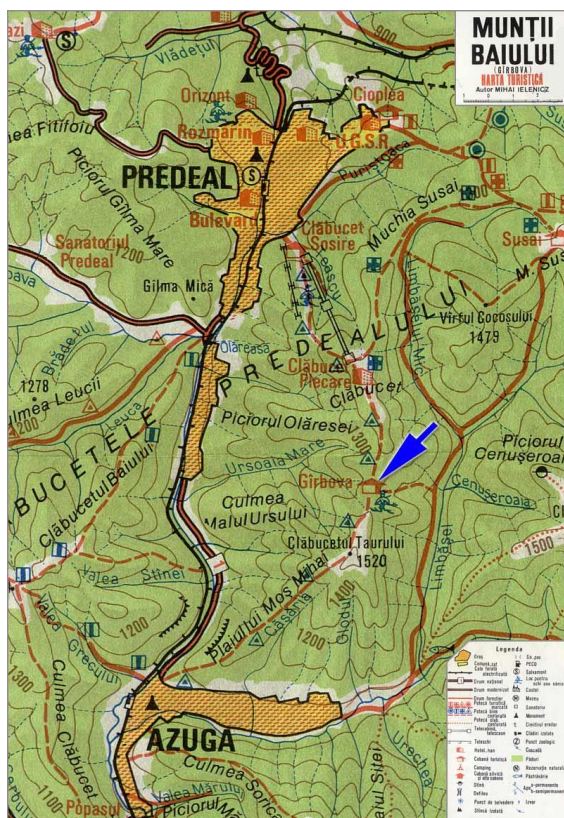


Figure 1. Baiului mountains [1]



Figure 2. Prahova County [2]

The Prahova Valley is a very famous touristic area and Azuga is part of the chain of mountain resorts in this valley where also Breaza, Busteni, Cheia, Paraul Rece, Poiana Brasov, Predeal, Sinaia, Slanic Prahova are met.



Figure 3. Aerial-view –Prahova valley [3].

Situated on the upper Prahova river, at the confluence with the tributary waters of Azuga stream, the city of Azuga is crossed by the national road DN1, connecting Ploiesti to Brasov. The railway connecting Ploiesti-Brasov, serves the city by the railway station Azuga.



Figure 4. Aerial-view – the town Azuga [4] .

Founded in 1830, Azuga was declared a town in 1948 and until 1881 was called "Between

Prahovas".

Along the time, many factories were built in Azuga, the first Glass Factory, built by Aslan in 1830, closed after only a few months; in 1879 it is built a new glass factory (owned by S. Grunfeld) , with about 250 employees, most of them brought from Bohemia; then a cheese factory was founded in 1882, a hydraulic lime factory (1885), a cement factory (1885), cloth factory (1887), salami factory (1877), timber factory (1888), champagne factory (1892) and firebrick plant factory (1908). But the most important factory built in Azuga was a brewery, built between 1898-1900 by the German specialist Grund.

Azuga is 12 km away from Sinaia (where in August 1866, a few months after ascending the throne, Prince Karl I made his first visit to Sinaia Monastery and remained impressed by the beauty of place, deciding on August 10, 1875 - the date of the foundation stone – to build here his summer royal residence). This proximity explains somehow the development of industries in the city of Azuga.

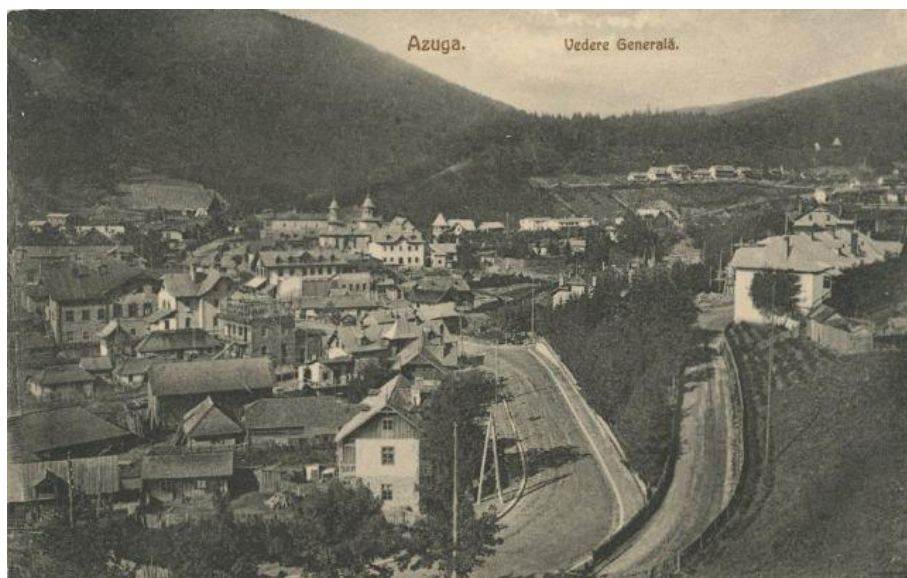
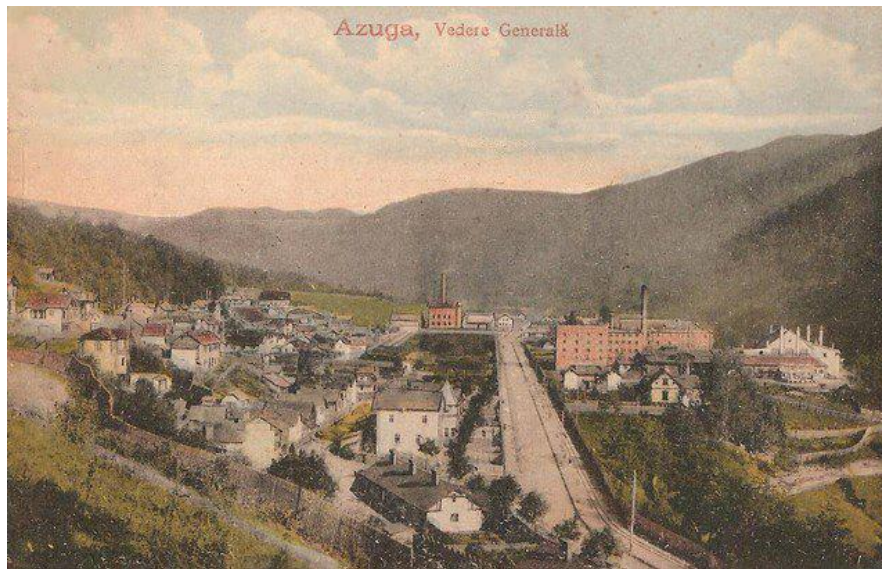


Figure 4. and 5. Historical images of Azuga seen from above: along the valley of Azuga (up) and along Prahova River, the national road DN1 and the railway (bottom) [5].

Today Azuga is a spa and touristic resort, especially famous for winter sports and summer hiking.

The city population is decreasing compared to the last census, counting just 4,400 inhabitants, job opportunities are weak, the majority in tourism.

The central area of the town is the area of maximum representation for administrative and historical city of Azuga. It maintains identity elements, both historical and cultural (classified historical monuments with significant values for the town), and many buildings that illustrate environmental value and a homogeneous development .

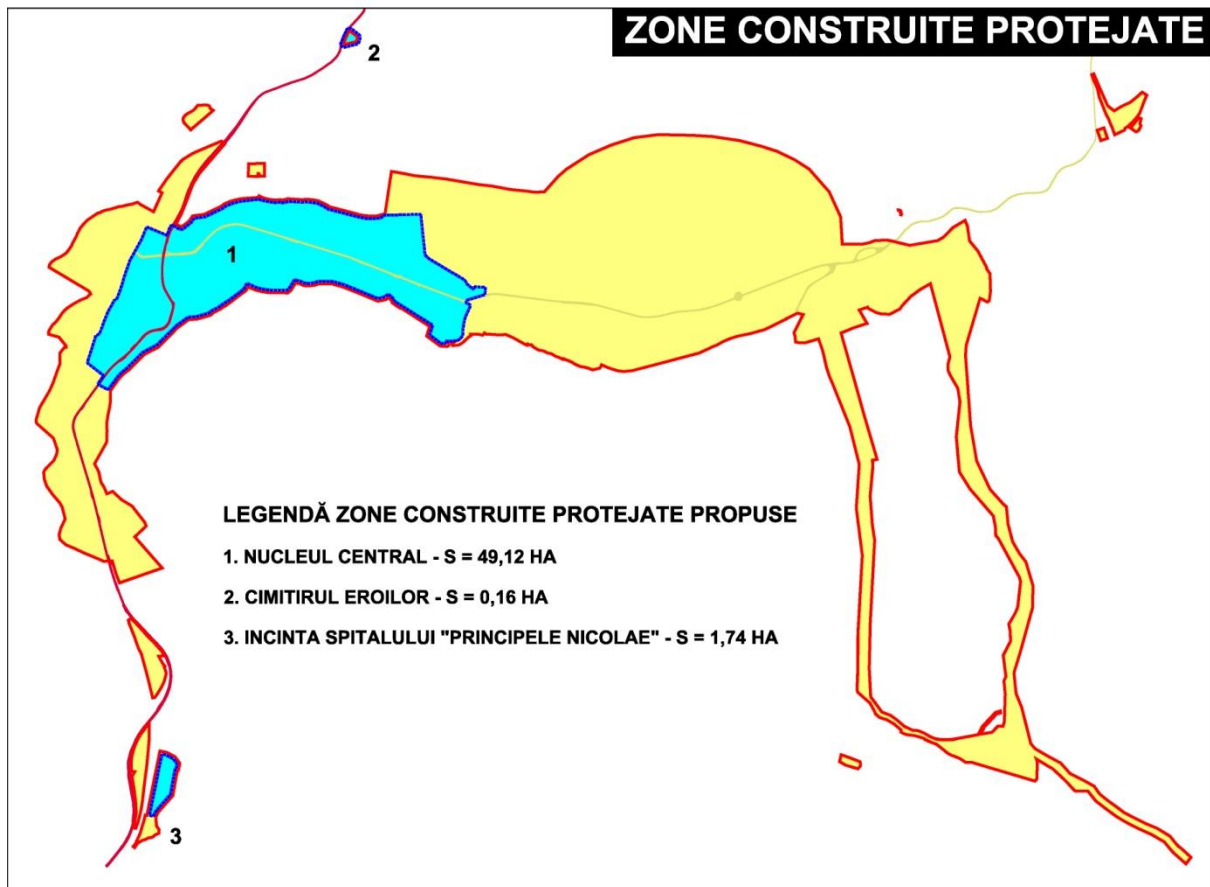


Figure 6. The protected built areas, in blue: 1 the central nucleus; 2 - Heroes Cemetery; 3 – “Principele Nicolae” hospital enclosure [6].

Although a small area, Azuga city shows a great heterogeneity of the built image, due to both relief and a very clear hierarchical and functional structure .

### 3. Anthropic Landscapes.

As urban planners, we identified a big variety of types of anthropic landscape, not only the so called cultural landscape of the central nucleus, proposed for protection, but in the whole town:

- the central area landscape
- mountain resorts landscape
- leisure/sports landscape
- low height residential area landscape with environmental value
- industrial landscape
- aisle (corridor) landscape along the valley of the river Azuga

They have great value and are representative areas of the local cultural heritage.

The entire city of Azuga has a strong and diverse image, and the urban planners proposed below summing up of the typologies of buildings, creating specific landscapes in connection with the natural environment

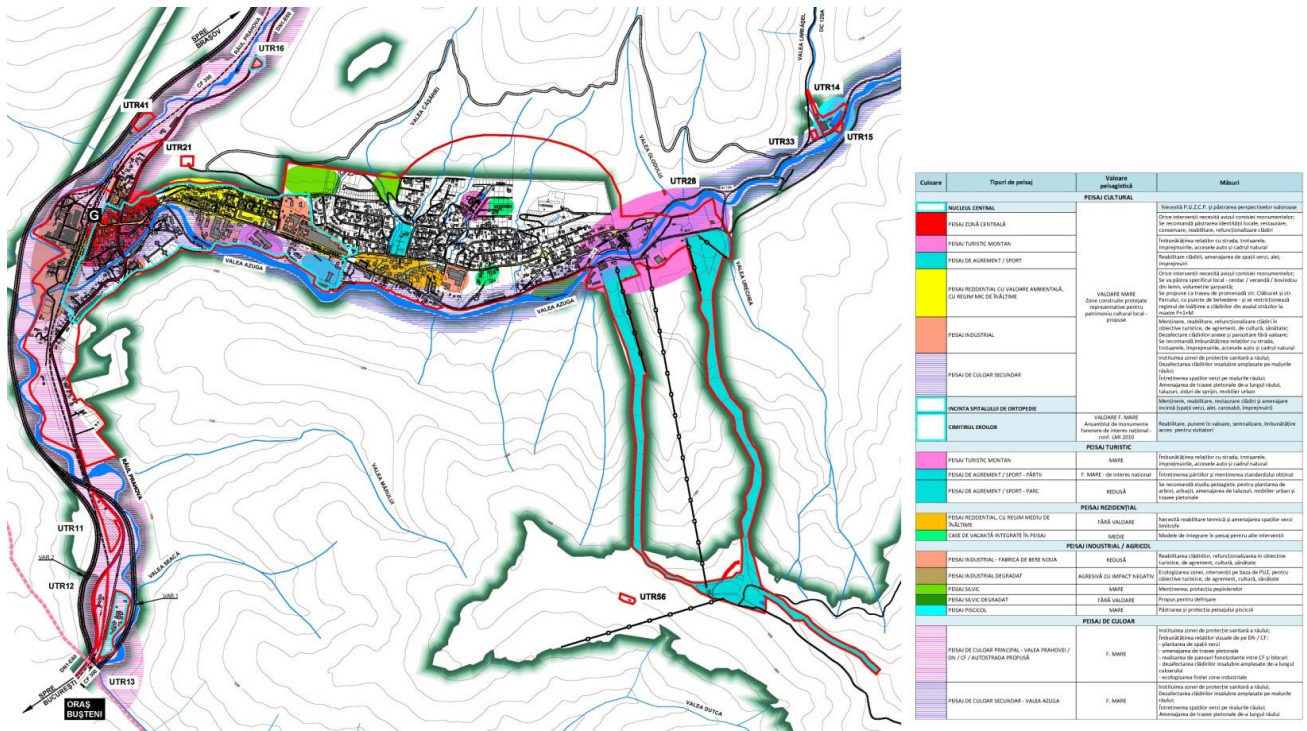


Figure 7. Identification and evaluation of the built landscape in Azuga [7, drawing 03].



Figure 8. Some examples of representative buildings in the central area [7, drawing05 - detail]

### 3.1. CENTRAL AREA

In agreement with the specificity of the town of Azuga, we proposed the necessary recommendations in this very important area, which belongs to protected areas in town. Here any needed/required intervention, has to respect the regulations of the protected built area (PUZCP) and must highlight the valuable perspectives (views). Any intervention requires the approval of the Commission of Monuments. It is recommended to keep the local identity, by the restoration, conservation and rehabilitation of buildings and by re-functionalisation at contemporary demands.

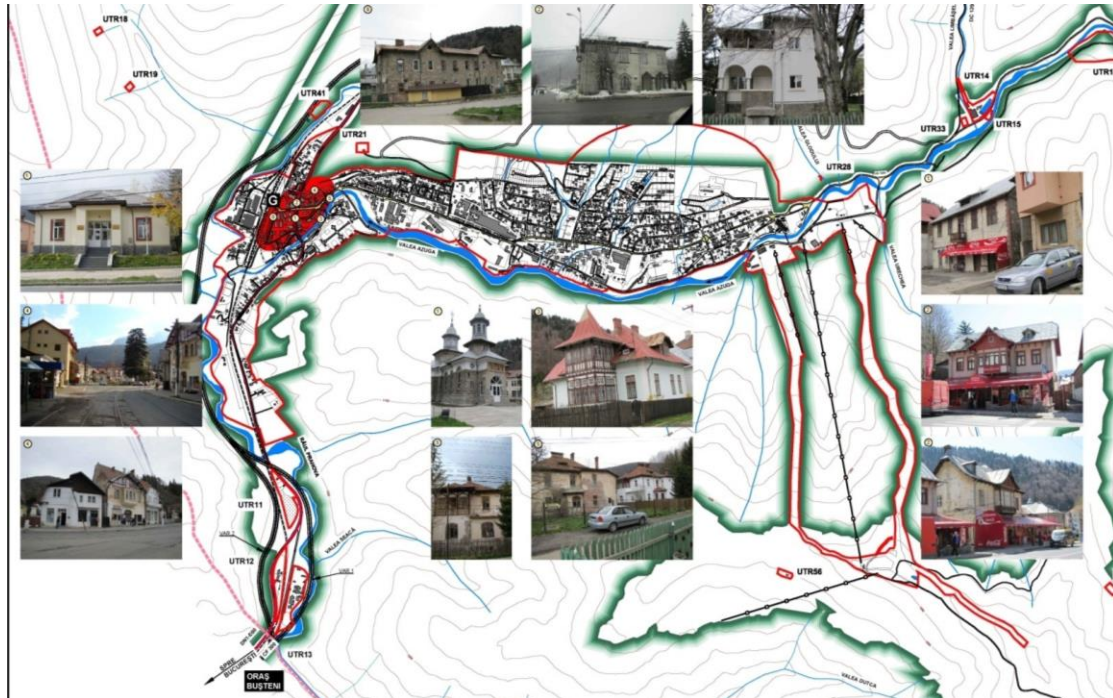


Figure 9. The central area - in red [7, drawing 04].

### 3.2. CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

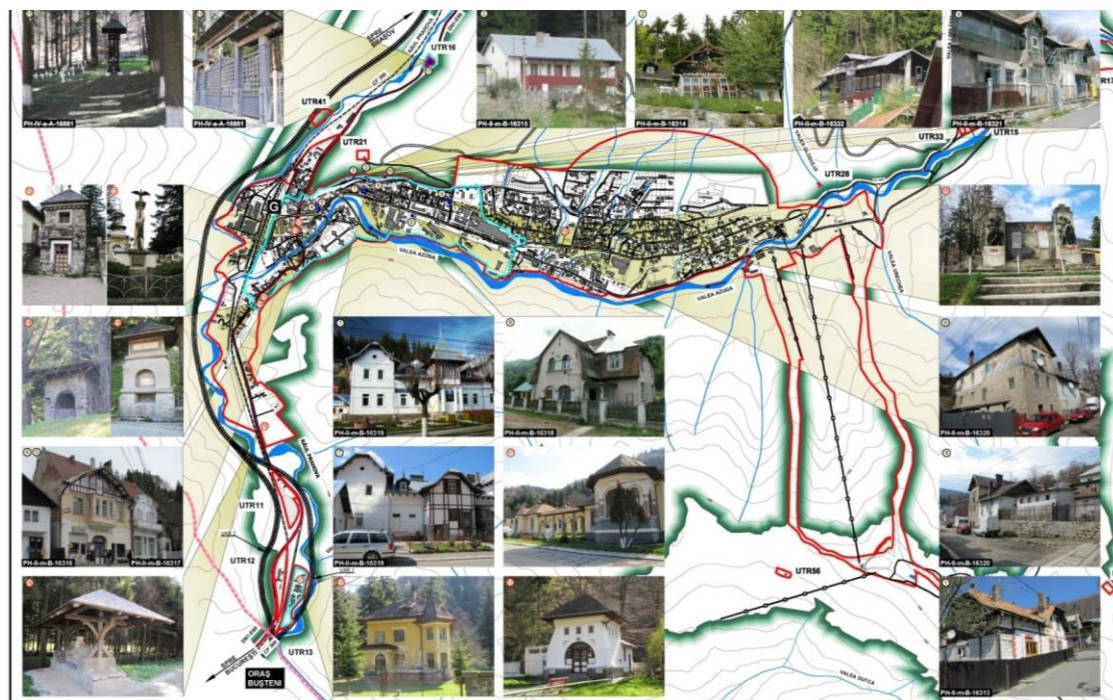


Figure 10. Locations of monuments of architecture [7, drawing 05].

Regarding the buildings classified as monuments of architecture (established by the List of Monuments of architecture in Romania, 2010) or proposed by us to be ranked, any intervention requires the approval of the Commission of Monuments. It is recommended to preserve local identity and the interventions allowed are: restoration, conservation, rehabilitation and re-functionalisation of buildings. These targets are possible to be accomplished by the public buildings, but rather difficult to be done by particular owners or by tenants.

### 3.3. AISLE (corridor) LANDSCAPE - along the valleys of rivers Prahova and Azuga

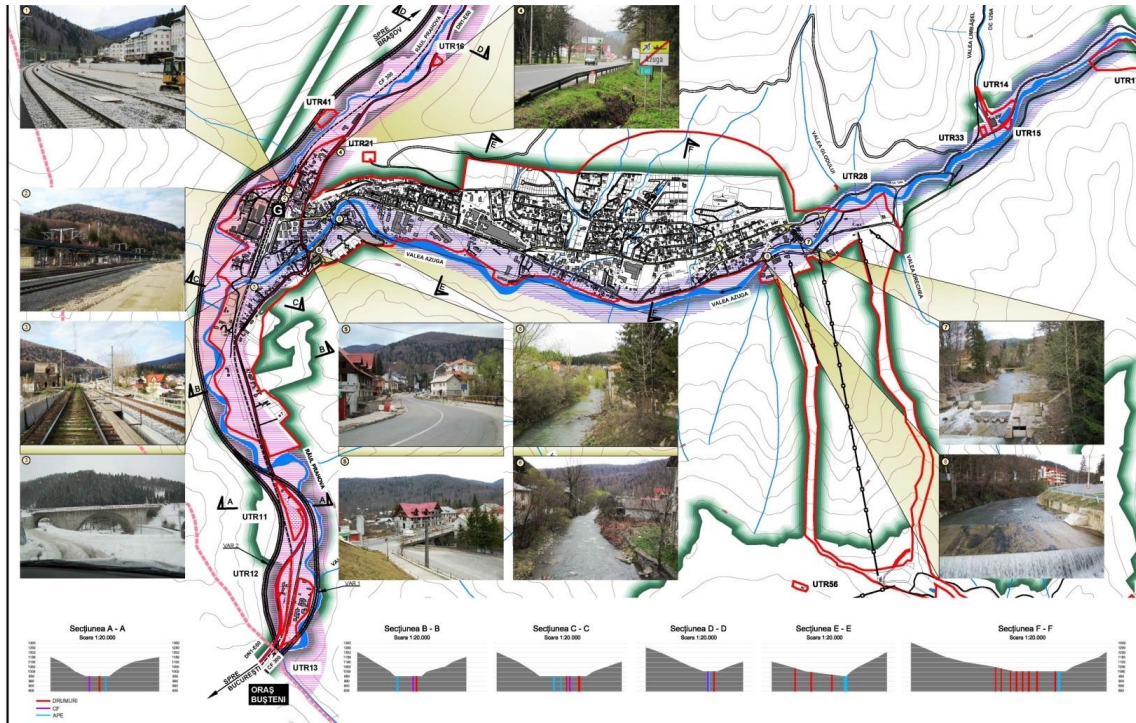


Figure 11. Valuable insights towards the rivers valleys [7, drawing 09].

We noticed a lack of concern for protecting the banks of rivers Prahova (above, in pink) and Azuga (above in purple), of the vegetation along them. Therefore it is absolutely necessary to establish sanitary protection zones of rivers. Along the valley of Azuga will be dismantled the unsanitary buildings located on the shore of the river, pedestrian paths will be built along the river, embankments, retaining walls are necessary as strengthening operations and urban furniture needs to be placed.

### 3.4. TOURISTIC LANDSCAPE - mountain resorts landscape

The cut down of industrial activities and the loss in consequence of numerous job opportunities, determined the majority of active population to get involved in tourism-related activities. Azuga was otherwise an attractive mountain resort, so besides numerous holiday homes, a lot of new guest houses and lodges were erected, new hotels were built in the proximity of the ski slopes Cazacu and Sorica, these being among the best ski slopes in Romania. As a consequence of this development of tourism, auto traffic has to be resized. In our proposals we also aim to create a detour to relieve the city streets of the crossing traffic towards the neighboring villages along the river valley Azuga and for the easy access to the slopes. Interventions in this area target the improvement of relations with the public space, with streets, sidewalks, fences, car accesses and natural framework (vertical systematization appropriate, suitable elements).

The existing sports buildings and grounds (leisure and recreational areas – represented below in



blue and pink) will be rehabilitated, together with the walkways and enclosures.

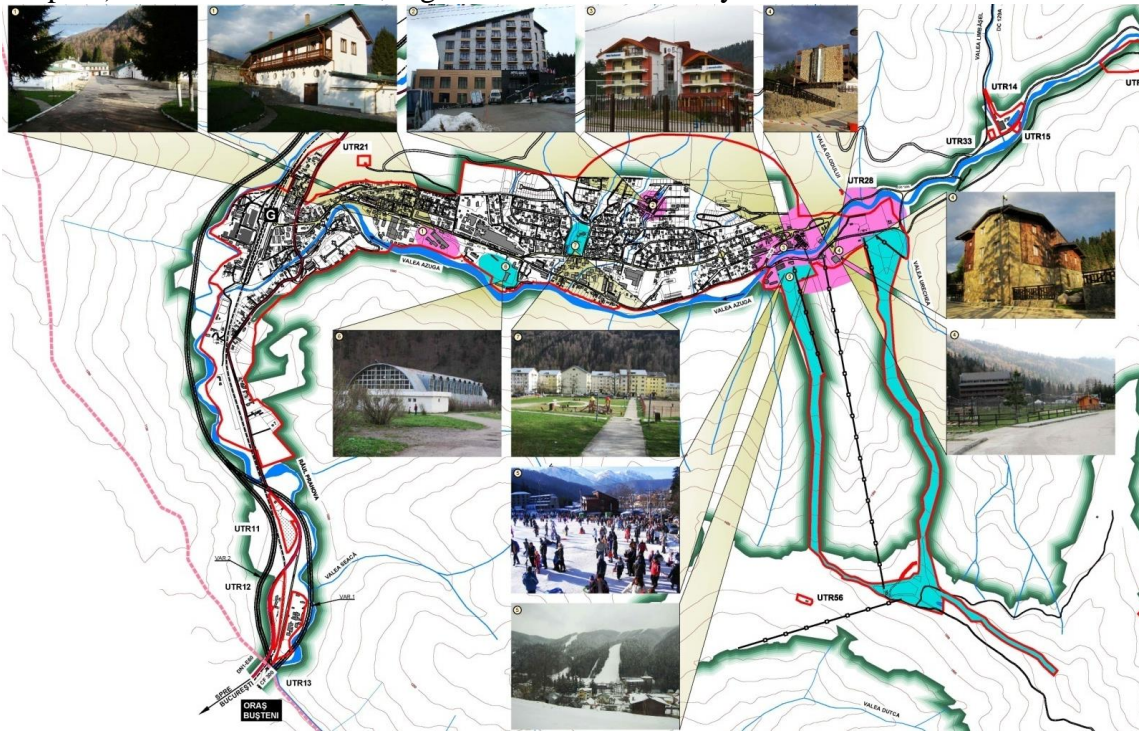


Figure 12. Locations of main hotels in the proximity of ski slopes [7, drawing 06].

### 3.5. INDUSTRIAL AND AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPE

In the *Plan for Sustainable Development in Prahova County for 2007-2013* (decisions of County Council. Prahova - HCJ of 18.12.2008) there were established some targets for. Azuga city:

- Mountaineering, through the further development of the ski slopes and correlation with capacity of accommodation;
- Travel rest and recreation: stay, leisure and weekends in mountain area;
- Itinerant tourism with cultural values for cultural heritage by including sightseeing circuits that highlight the cultural landscape (Prahova Valley: Bucharest - Ploiesti - Banesti - Câmpina - Sinaia - Busteni – Azuga);
- Business tourism with the organization of meetings, congresses, - in Sinaia, Busteni, Azuga Breaza, which will provide specific facilities.

A part of these functions can be created in the existing rehabilitated industrial buildings, deprived of their former activities. A few of these buildings were demolished by the new owners (below in brown), others are waiting for a new use. Only one of these buildings was restored successfully: the factory of champagne Rhein & Cie Cellars (founded in 1892, the winery became the official supplier of the Royal House in 1920). On April 27, 2006, Halewood Cellars received the status of 'Supplier of His Majesty King Mihai I of Romania for sparkling wines. Therefore we recommend maintaining, rehabilitation and re-functionalisation of the existing industrial buildings (below in red) as touristic, recreational, health, cultural equipments and the demolition of the valueless annexes only. At the same time, it is important the improvement of spatial relations with the public space, with street, with sidewalks, fences, car accesses and natural framework.

The agricultural landscape (below in green) consists of forestry nursery area, forest areas located in various states and the fishery area Limbasel. The forest landscape must be maintained, and trees nurseries must be protected - only the degraded, valueless trees can be proposed for grubbing. The Fishery resources have to be maintained and protected.

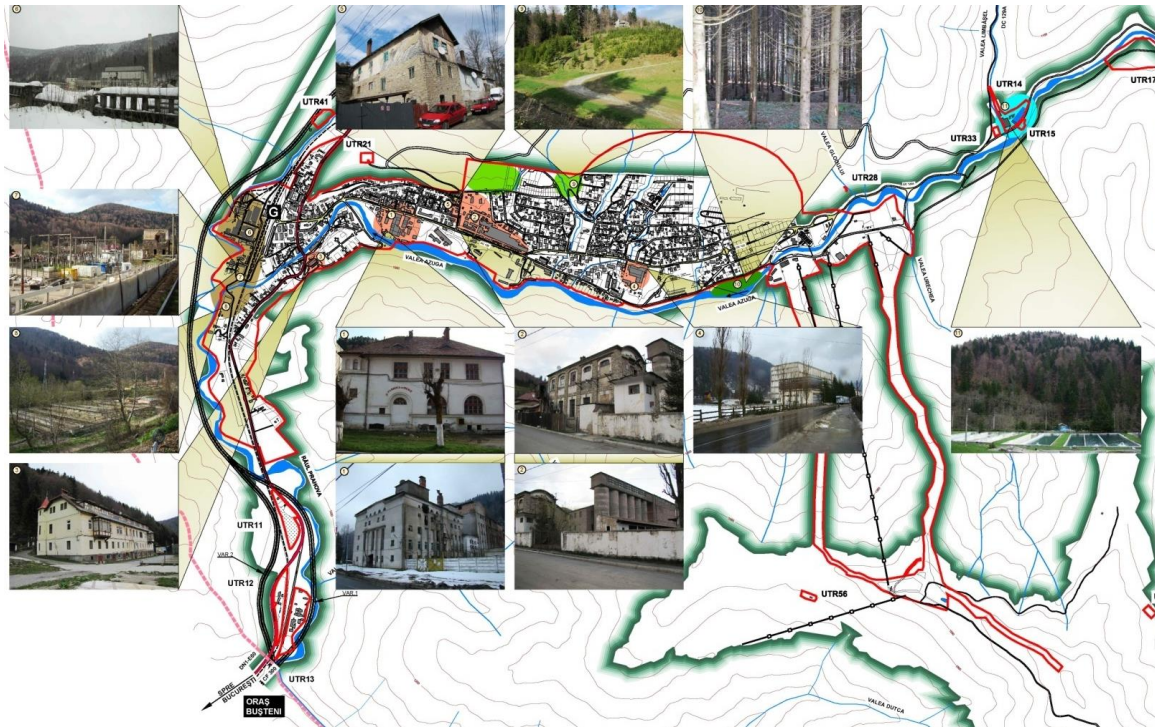


Figure 13. The main industrial and agricultural areas situated along river Azuga [7, drawing 08]

### 3.6. RESIDENTIAL LANDSCAPE

We distinguished two types of dwelling in Azuga (below, in yellow and orange): low height residential buildings with environmental values and medium height apartment blocks. In the area of low height dwellings, any intervention requires the approval of the Commission of Monuments. The local specificity must be kept: porches, wooden bow-window, the massing of roofs. There are proposed as pedestrian paths and promenades, Clabucet and Parcului streets, where belvedere points are proposed to be built with the restriction of the height of buildings, further down these streets, with a maximum of ground floor, first floor and attic.

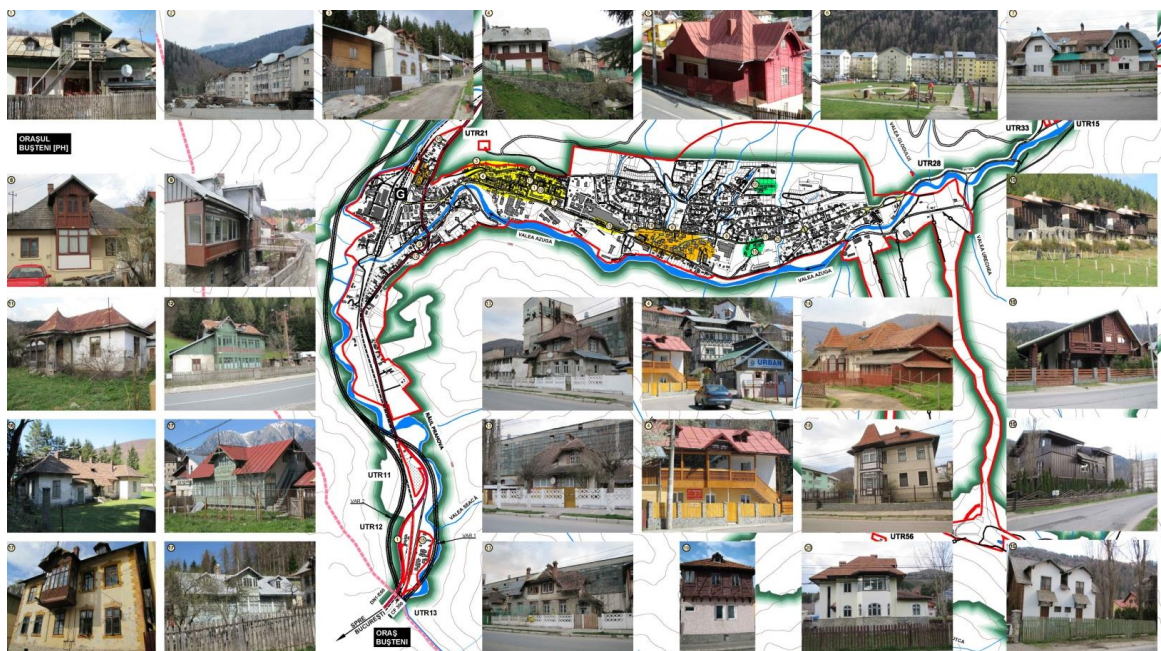


Figure 14. Low height residential buildings with environmental values [7, drawing 07]

Housing with medium height regime can be found on two locations: in the train station area, respectively in the southern part of the city, near the valley of river Azuga. The apartment blocks require thermal rehabilitation and adjacent area in the districts needs the arrangement of green spaces, of pedestrian paths and of parking lots.



Figure 15. Medium height apartment blocks .

#### 4. Specific spatial relationships in Azuga.



Figure 16. Buildings in natural environment [7, drawing10].

On the slope with southern exposure, bordered by the river Azuga right bank, rises most housing and vacation lodges. Slopes with northern exposure, bordered by the river's left bank, host ski tracks, accompanied at basis by increasingly crowded hotels. The former industries lye in the middle of this valley, emphasizing from distance the axis - image of valley of Azuga from its confluence with the river Prahova and the national road DN1.

Azuga city's built environment is valuable. The urban tissue and the reversible relationship with the impressive relief, as a natural determinant of the urban form [8], must be preserved, restored, re-functionalised and harmoniously enriched with new facilities deemed necessary. Improving appearance of the streets, especially the sidewalks, fencing, gardens, works of vertical systematization (embankments, retaining walls) are urgently needed. With a program of actions / PID sites, this resort can play a representative role during the organization of the Winter Olympic Games in Prahova Valley in 2020.

## 5. Conclusions

Our study shows what has to be done to preserve the special identity of Azuga city. In fact, we propose the appropriate regulations, the needed measures that have to be taken in the near future. But there are issues stemming from real development opportunities, either in economic terms or attitudes of actors involved in the management of the city, mostly regarding the protection of valuable buildings. These, when not in private property of the individuals or institutions, are rented by people with modest material conditions and therefore unable to take care of their state. Considering the industrial heritage, this is the most threatening. This is already inexpensively sold to people less conscious of the identity value of the constructions, and evaluated only at the real estate value, industries being very well placed along the valley of the river Azuga, near coniferous forests and in proximity of attractive ski slopes. Thus, the new owners are interested in building dense dwellings, accommodation places, and hotels. To ensure the sustainability of the city, so that it preserve the physical identity [9] which gives its uniqueness and at the same time to ensure a future for the working population, will require a responsible involvement of the actors managing the city.

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