

Tourism Development and Geographic Landscapes. Case Study: Azuga Town

VIOREL PUIU, VASILE ZOTIC, DIANA-ELENA ALEXANDRU

Faculty of Geography
Babeş-Bolyai University
Cluj-Napoca, 5-7, Clinicilor Street
ROMANIA

viorel_puiu@geografie.ubbcluj.ro, zoticv@geografie.ubbcluj.ro, diana.alexandru@geografie.ubbcluj.ro
<http://geografie.ubbcluj.ro/>

Abstract: - The geographic landscape represents a global interdisciplinary concept, integrating the natural with the social, through which man has changed and replaced the original ecosystems according to his needs and level of organization and development of the community to which it belongs. It can be defined as a result of the interrelations between physical and geographic components and human activity, also being subject to natural and socio-economic modelling. Therefore it results in a diversity of landscapes, with a higher anthropogenic influence in urban areas, whereas lower in rural areas. At the same time, the geographic landscape in association with tourism activities determines the emergence of a hybrid typology. Hence, concepts such as natural landscapes, altered landscapes or anthropogenic landscapes bring out new categories and identities. Tourism is one of the main beneficiaries of the geographic landscape, it basically representing support for the development of tourist activities. The typology and quality of geographic landscapes sets the premises for a typology of tourism activities, either stimulating or inhibiting tourism development. Starting from these general hypotheses in this paper we try to demonstrate the relationship between geographic landscape and tourism activities already developed or suitable to grow, by choosing Azuga town as case study.

Key-Words: - *geographic landscape, landscape typology, natural landscape, altered landscape, anthropogenic landscape, landscape relevance and level of tourist attraction*

1. Trends and concepts associated with the geographic landscape

The geosystem is the functional image of the environment, which we could compare with the circulatory system of a living organism.

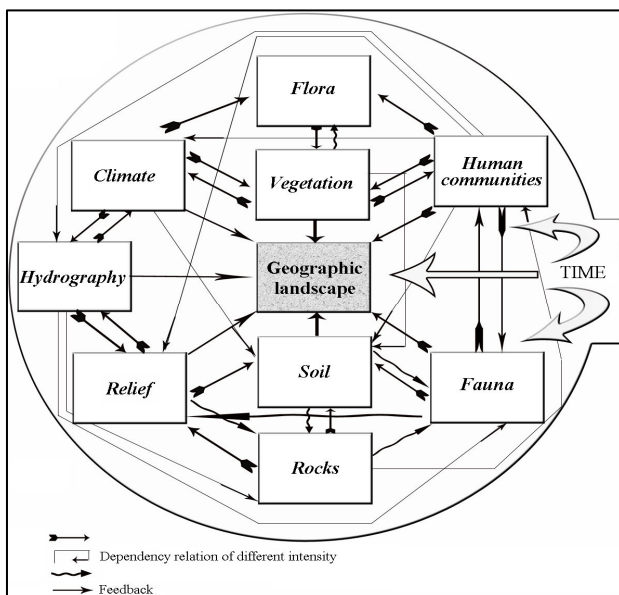


Fig. 1. The concept of landscape in ecological context [4].

There is a mutual conditioning between environment, landscape and geosystem. *Any imbalance in the geosystem brings changes in the landscape (environment), as the altered landscape can lead to disorders affecting the geosystem* (fig. 1)[4].

Landscape is the image of entirety composed of dynamic elements each with its own expression and role in the overall context. It is a term commonly used to designate a portion of land characterized by specific geographic, natural or human features. Lucian Drăguț (2000) sees the landscape as “*the visual projection of any psychological relationship that man has with the place he lives in*” [3].

Therefore, there is a way of perceiving or observing a territory and its traits as *an area seen from a single perspective*. The French geographer R. Brunet (1974) notes that “*landscape is thus an appearance and a representation, an arrangement of visible objects, perceived by the subject through its own filters, humour and purpose*” [1]. Although certain elements of the landscape may not be subject to the direct action of man, they cannot be named landscape elements without the contemplative action of *measuring all things*.

The local specificity of the landscape is revealed by the way of combining the unchanged natural elements with the ones introduced by man.

Thus, it determines a variety of landscapes on which human influence knows a variable intensity, stronger in case of urban agglomerations, whereas more diffuse in rural areas.

We can conclude that landscape is a complex, dynamic notion, with strong multidisciplinary features that defines *the territorial unit with certain homogeneous features both structurally and functionally, as reflected by the interaction of natural biotic and abiotic elements and features introduced by man and human communities, in which one or a group of components stand out, visible and sustainable, giving the environment some specificity or representation.*

These attributes of the concept are available to a certain territorial scale, to which definite benchmarks of the environmental elements may be applied and that could induce territory certain distinctive features.

2. The classification of geographic landscapes

For the classification of geographic landscape there should be considered that part of the concept which states its fundamental features as *homogeneity and heterogeneity*. Heterogeneity is the feature arising from the integration of different components that ensure its functionality, systemic flexibility as well as development and adaptation to various external impulses. Homogeneity is the expression of ecological, functional and space-time identity in order to ensure a certain continuity or uniformity of space it can be found in.

Seeking a classification closer to the global and complex sense that geography has in the interpretation of the variety of landscapes, we started from the one proposed by I. Mac (2000), who in addition to the important causes that separate the two great landscape classes (natural and anthropogenic) sets an item or a group of elements within an area according to the criterion of representation, listed below [5].

Thus, by the criterion imposed by the **relief** features there may be: *landscapes of mountain, hill, plateau, plain or delta*; **vegetation** may require a *landscape of forest, steppe, or tundra*; **water** can bring out: *marine, lake, sea, glacial landscapes*; **human activities** can determine the development of *agricultural landscape, industrial landscape, urban landscape, countryside, tourist landscape, etc.* These types can be considered landscapes of higher

rank, which can consist of other diverse landscapes, integrated on different hierarchical levels, by category of representative elements of a particular spatial unit. For example, **mountain landscape** can include *karst or glacial landscapes, ridge or slope landscapes*. On the other hand, **forest landscape** can include the *landscape of beech, pine, oak forests or mountain forests, hilly forests, plain and meadow forests*; in case of the **lake landscape** we can identify *landscapes of river estuaries, lagoons, ice lakes*, whereas the **agricultural landscape** can include *landscapes of orchards, winery, of cultivated fields* etc.

This model is only an early stage, because things are more complicated regarding the criteria of separation of types and subtypes of landscapes. It is difficult to shape a comprehensive array of landscape categories sufficient to cover the diverse physical environment, the relationships between habitats, and landscape changes caused by the exploitation of natural resources. However, **the type of rural or urban habitat** may include: *housing landscapes (residential districts, residential sectors, unhealthy housing clusters, landscape of hamlets, etc.) industrial landscapes, agricultural landscapes, cultural landscapes, etc.*

Therefore, it can be said that geographic landscapes come in many shapes, according to the overall realities of the territory and the character of certain elements taken into account. Usually, it is considered that there are two broad categories of geographic landscapes: **natural landscapes** and **humanized landscapes** (*cultured* according to some authors).

One can appreciate that natural landscapes can be considered **primary landscapes** and where there is partial human intervention on the natural, in which the natural and human elements coexist in a relative balance, we are dealing with **derivative landscapes** (i.e. *tourist landscapes* that have dominant and picturesque nature).

Finally, the third category is represented by the **anthropogenic landscapes**, in which natural elements were mostly transformed or even replaced by items built by man.

Each of the aforementioned types of landscape can be also classified according to a number of features, such as:

a). *the state of stability or equilibrium*: stable landscapes, landscapes in relative balance, unstable landscapes.

b). *the territorial relations between landscapes*: well-individualized landscapes, landscapes with elements of interference, landscapes integrated in other landscapes.

c). *the self-control ability*: normally self-controlled landscapes, landscapes with poor self-control, artificially controlled landscapes.

d). *the type of alteration suffered*: landscapes with altered hydrographical elements, landscapes with topographic alterations, landscapes with soil alterations.

e). *the systems' behaviour*: biostasy landscapes, rhexistasy landscapes, parastasy landscapes.

f). *the social dynamics*: landscapes with upward social dynamics, landscapes with downward social dynamics, and landscapes with steady social dynamics.

Evidently, any other feature of landscape that distinguishes it from others, may constitute a criterion for classification, other than those listed above and yet it must be as close as possible to the objective reality, specific to every territorial situation approached.

3. Tourism – the main beneficiary of geographic landscapes

Tourism is one of the main beneficiaries of geographic landscapes, these mainly representing the “raw material” in the development of tourism activities.

The landscape's character of “raw material” in tourism activities means that it represents the trigger factor of tourists' curiosity on the one hand, it mobilizing and determining them to decide on a stay or a type of stay and on the other hand it stands for the main element of the tourism offer.

The typology and quality of geographic landscape establish the typology and extent of tourism activities, whereas the faded or degraded landscapes are not attractive for tourism development.

Natural and quasi-natural landscapes determine and stimulate the development of leisure and recreational tourism as the anthropogenic landscapes determine and enhance cultural tourism and a variety of this basic category (historical, ecumenical etc).

The geographic areas with attractive landscapes also determine the spatial concentration of tourism infrastructure, according to the principle of localization near the source, as well as an architectural and functional adaptation according to the principle of harmonious integration.

The presence of a large variety of landscapes within a small territorial unit causes even a higher concentration and diversification of tourism activities.

The lack of attractive landscapes or highly anthropogenic can determine the inhibition of development activities or prove the need for landscape works adapted to improve its value.

4. Types of landscapes in Azuga Town and their tourist value

Within the administrative territory of Azuga three major categories of landscapes can be individualized: natural, quasi-natural and anthropogenic.

These are completed by a series of distinct landscape elements composed of orographic nodes and lines, thalwegs, springs, sheepfolds, roads and paths, lookout points etc.

The structure and typology of landscapes within the administrative territory of Azuga town are the result of the association of natural elements with the anthropogenic exploitation of the territory over time.

Overall, natural and quasi-natural landscapes prevail, as the anthropogenic landscapes are mainly localized within Azuga town and its adjacent area.

The primary element in defining the landscape structure within the territory is considered the relief, which through its altitude, peaks orientation to cardinal points and slope requires a certain structuring of the derivative and anthropogenic landscape elements.

The results of this association are the following types and subtypes within the categories listed:

a). Natural landscapes: a₁). Landscape of coniferous forests (mountain boreal forests of fir and spruce); a₂). Mixed forest landscape (Carpathian beech and spruce); a₃). Deciduous forest landscape.

b). Altered landscapes: b₁). Secondary pastures landscape on deforested land in former periods; b₂). Pastures landscape on newly cleared land; b₃). Landscape of forest plantations, b₄). Landscape of mountain valleys; b₅). Degraded landscape (torrents) from overgrazing.

c). Anthropogenic Landscapes: c₁). Urban residential landscape: c_{1.1}). *Old compact city – low height buildings*, c_{1.2}). *New scattered city – micro-district with average height buildings*, c_{1.3}). *Conventional urban area – low height buildings on former plots*, c_{1.4}). *Conventional urban area – residential and holiday houses on new plots*, c_{1.5}). *Conventional rural area – traditional households of vernacular architecture*; Recreational housing landscape: c_{2.1}). *New cityscape (hotels, guesthouses and holiday houses)*; c₃). Public built landscape: c_{3.1}). *Built landscape for administrative amenities*;

c₄). Sacral and commemorative landscape: c_{4.1}). Churches, cemetery of heroes; c₅). Industrial landscape: c_{5.1}). Old industrial facilities, c_{5.2}). New industrial facilities, c_{5.3}). Warehouses, municipal infrastructure;

c₆). Transportation routes landscape: c_{6.1}). Major railroads and industrial railroads, c_{6.2}). National roads, c_{6.3}). Urban streets, other roads;

c₇). Recreational landscape: c_{7.1}). Parks and squares, c_{7.2}). Open green areas, c_{7.3}). Areas and facilities for winter sports, c_{7.4}). Areas and facilities for summer sports; c₈). “Back-up” urban landscape: c_{8.1}). Meadows resulted from recent deforested areas used for new recreational houses, c_{8.2}). Open land reserved for future urban development, c_{8.3}). Brownfield sites.

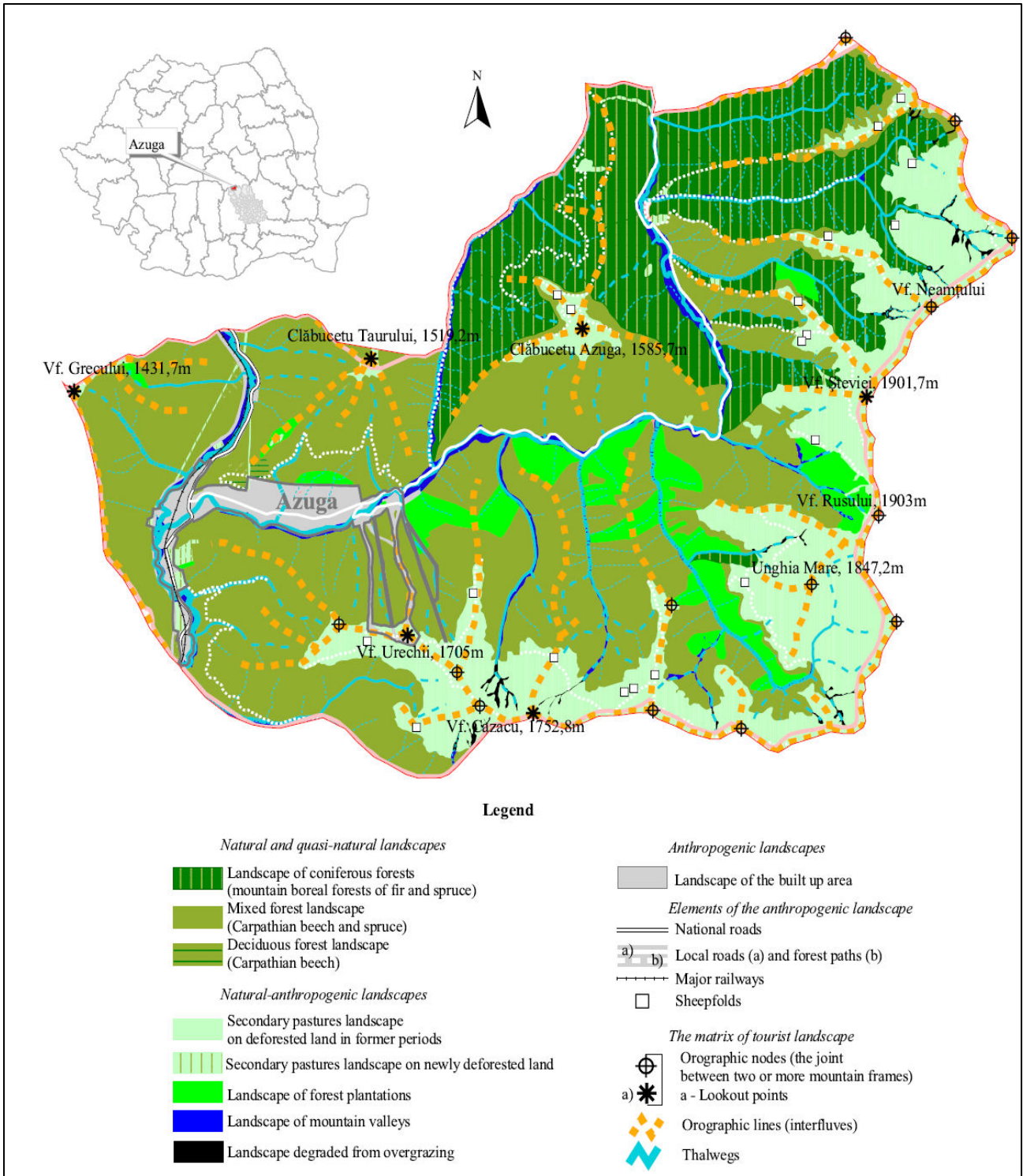


Fig. 2. The typology of geographic landscape within the administrative area of Azuga town.

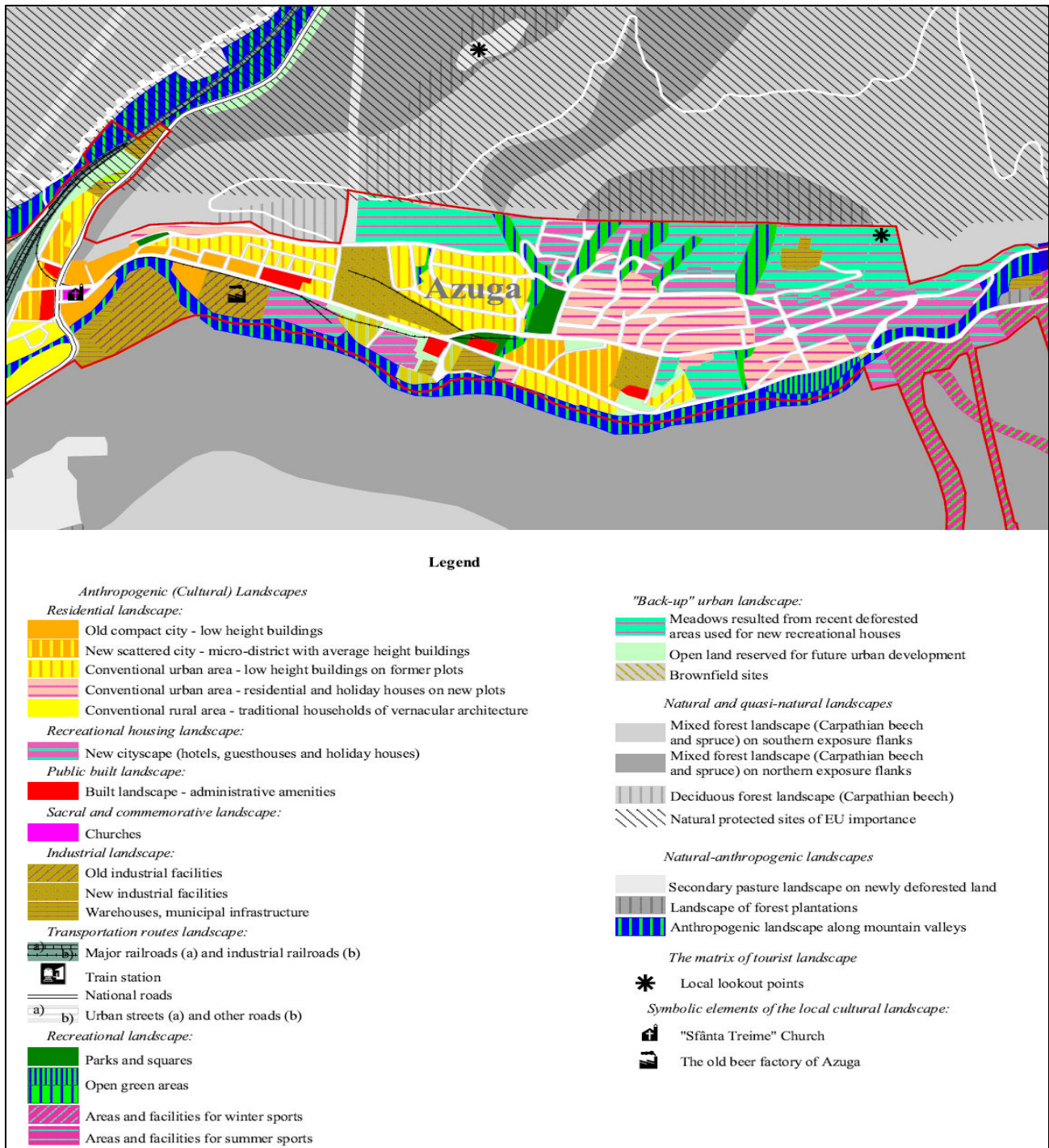


Fig. 3. The typology of geographic landscape within the built up area of Azuga town.

Each of these categories, types and subtypes of geographic landscapes within the administrative territory and the built up area of Azuga town, besides their geographic and ecological significance, they also have tourism importance. For example, the landscape of coniferous forests (mountain boreal forests of fir and spruce) has a great tourist value.

This derives from the association of pine forests with relief thus creating an attractive

environment. Another example worth mentioning is the landscape of secondary pastures on deforested land in former periods – anthropogenic landscape - that develops in the higher mountain areas. The level of attraction of this type of landscape results from its management regarding sheep pasturing, the existence of sheepfolds, as well as the presence of large opening areas that generate new perspectives for developing other adjacent landscape categories.

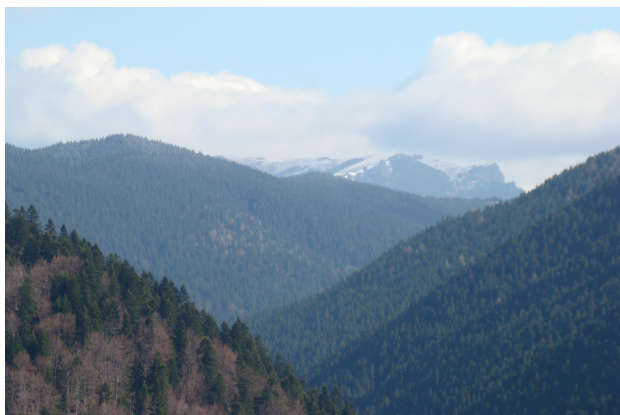


Fig. 4. Landscape of coniferous forests (fir and spruce).

Hence, due to this feature (the presence of secondary pastures) Baiului Mountains are intensively exploited for mountain hiking activities.



Fig. 5. Landscape of secondary subalpine pastures.

A third example would be related to the tourist significance of an anthropogenic landscape within the built up area of Azuga town.



Fig. 6. Old compact cityscape – low height buildings (Art Nouveau building).

Due to the presence of an old compact urban complex, with low height buildings, which represents the first urban housing constructions built at the beginning of the 20th century, in

accordance with all sorts of architectural styles and trends of that period. The most representative architectural styles are: Neobrâncovenesc, Art Nouveau, Eclectic, adapted German Neo-Renaissance. They bring value to the urban built landscape and become tourist attractions for cultural and historical tourism. Much more, the new tourist facilities, hotels, guesthouses, restaurants, incorporated in the old residential buildings take over a series of elements of the former architectural style, thus increasing their tourist value.

This tourist value of the landscape resulted in a complex development of tourism activities in Azuga town, here all basic forms of tourism being found: recreational, leisure, sports, historical, cultural. The complexity of tourism activities in Azuga city is proved by the substantially tourist flow, the high number of accommodation units and their high rank, the number and type of recreational sports facilities etc.).

5. Conclusion

The study of geographic landscape in terms of its relevance and level of tourist attraction represents a contemporary issue in the territorial tourist organization. In this respect, it is necessary first to assess the tourist value of landscape elements and landscape as a whole and to develop a methodology for mapping the landscape.

Eventually, based on the assessment of the landscape's state and vulnerability to human impact it is necessary to manage the landscape for tourism purposes through spatial planning activities. These actions will result in an appropriate combination of types of tourism activities with landscape typology, thus avoiding the emergence of conflicting territorial structures and states in tourism spatial planning.

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