

THE STIMULATING OFFER OF RURAL TOURISM IN BUDA VILLAGE, BERZUNȚI COUNTY; POSSIBILITIES OF (RE)ADAPTATION REGARDING THE MODERN TOURIST PREFERENCES

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Abstract: Considering the fact that the village taken into study, like many Romanian settlements, faces with problems like depopulation and accelerated aging of local community, being unable to sustain an optimal agriculture, caused by shortcomings expansion of the industrialization process, the present paper aims to highlight the chances of rural tourism implementation, its possible effects and to realize a stimulative offer, readjusting it to the modern tourist preferences, through a rigorous analysis of primary and derived tourist offer by means of graphic, cartographic materials and through a survey application which aims to reveal the local community’s perception over rural tourism.

Key words: local bioclimate, ecumenical tourism, slow food, tourist needs, local community

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INTRODUCTION

A common problem which exists on the entire territory of Romania, is represented by the fact that, after communism period, the development was misunderstood and the actions taken in this sense were centered on centralized development and not on integrated development. Therefore wasn’t manifested an efficient planning, considering the fact that the territory develops by itself. Gradually, has appeared the polarization phenomenon, the attention being centered on urban settlements which, due to socio-economic development, have already had an influence over the adjacent areas and have already had an well contured hinterland. Currently, in Romania exists several counties within which public administration distributed the attention only over some polarizing centers, but the other parts of counties territories didn’t receive the proper attention, all

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financial funds marching to these urban settlements, aspect that drove to stragnation or even reduction of economical power, tehnicl infrastructure and hole patrimony degradation etc. Therefore, there wasn't practiced an integral development to follow an unitary development of a territory, but only a centralized development, the actions punctually being contured, all of these leading to a process of periferization.

In Romania, the pass from rural to urban areas was made suddenly, the buffer space not being taken into account. The vision and the actions made by public authorities drove to a territorial stiffness, missing that harmony between rural and urban areas. Because that buffer space doesn't exist, many frictions and different visions of development appeared, the disfavoured territories being in a process of stagnation or even regresion from the socio-economical view.

The same vicissitude exists in Bacău county, due to centralized development approach, in this way appearing many pheripheral zones with poor rural settlements. With a total population of 380.306 and with a number of 515 settlements, this county has, in what concerns the rural area, from a number of 93 territorial administrative units, 85 communes and 491 villages. This means that each urban settlement lies 60,62 villages, more than the national average that is 50 villages for a urban settlement (County Territorial Planning of Bacău, 2003).

An eloquent example is represented by Buda village, from Berzunți commune. The commune taken into study disposes by a surface of 5673 ha, a population of 5423 inhabitants, being bordered by Poduri commune (Cernu and Bucșești villages), Berești-Tazlău commune (Turliuanu village) and Sănduleni commune (Verșești-Coton village).¹

The rural settlement taken into study is situated in central part of Bacău county, in the contact area between Carpathians and Subcarpathians, in the foothills of Berzunți Mountains (982 meters) (Berzunți City Hall, 2013).

Buda is a rural settlement with a small hearth (under 50 ha), by spatial character is a village with a continuous hearth, by spatial shape the village has a valley hearth with a irregular shape and by hearth structure is a compact village which is characterized by a strong concentration of households and facilities and a clear delineation from agricultural and forest territory.

Situated in Tazlăul Mare river's basin, Buda village is crossed by Buda and Schitul brooks which are tributary of Cernu brook (Berzunți City Hall, 2013).

The soils are poor in loam and other nutritional substances, less favorable for plant development, the village being cathegorized in the 5th zone of fertility. Though, can be remarqued the growing of fruit trees (plums, apples, pears) of forage plants (clover, alfalfa, oats), of corn, vine.

Regarding the vegetation, can be noted the steppe, oak, beech, hornbeam, birch forests. In what concerns the herbaceous vegetation it can be enumerated the medicinal plants like plantain, chamomile, mullet, nettle, yarrow, wormwood (Berzunți City Hall, 2013).

The fauna which is met in Buda village enumerates various species of reptiles (lizard, green lizard, snaje wood, tree frog, salamander, toad), fish (chub, barbel, crucian, belda), insects (green butterfly, grasshopper, cricket, firefly), rodents (field mouse, mole, hare), polecats, foxes, wolves, lynx, wild boar, squirrels, badgers, birds (starlings, sparrow hawk, goshawk, thrush, jay, wookpecker, hoopoe, owl, larks, swallows, swifts) (Berzunți City Hall, 2013).

¹ www.berzunți.ro/pagina/prezentare_generală

On the territory of Buda village is was identified the temperate continental climate of hills and plateaus, characterized by annual average temperatures of 6-8 Celsius degrees and annual average precipitations of 800-1000 mm (Berzunți City Hall, 2013).

The transport infrastructure is represented only by a road, Buda village being crossed by 117 County road which links Livezi, Poduri, Moinești and Bacău (Berzunți City Hall, 2013).

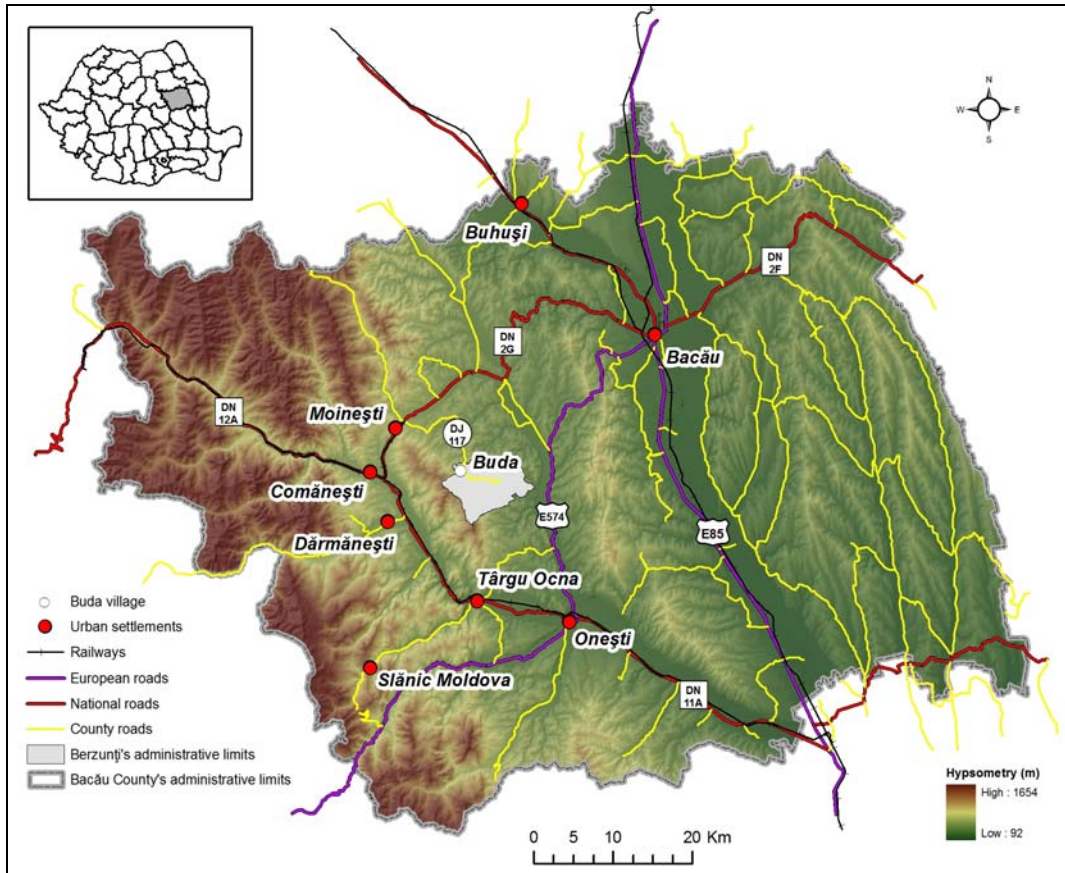


Figure 1. County contextualization of Berzunți commune and Buda village

Regarding the facilities, Buda disposes by an elementary school and Saint Sava Monastery.

In what concern the handicraft traditions, can be noted wood carving, eloquent evidences being the oak doors with reasons as funioa, sun, tree, deer, bear, grape. A special ornament can be met at breast annexes (stables) for animals, roof wells, gates and balconies. Another traditional handicraft is represented by the tissue which through using the horizontal and vertical looms, can be woven carpets, rugs, linen and hemp, with various reasons: peony, rose, tree, diamond. In Buda village also exist blacksmithing workshops covering an oriel, anvil, and which is made of iron plow, horseshoes for horses and cattles, different parts of horses or oxen carts and varous work tools: hoe, hoes, axes. ²

² www.berzunți.ro/pagina/prezentare_generală

From the touristic point of view, Buda village distinguishes by Saint Sava Monastery, initially built in 1809 in Berzunți Mountains, after this being forced to get down at mountain foothills in 1828, by Berzunți hermitage situated in the mountains with the same name at 900 meters height. Therefore, the only form of tourism which is practiced in this village taken into study is the religious one.

THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

Romanian rural settlements are undergoing through a not very favorable period in terms of economy, because these are experiencing a population decline (intensive migration and negative rate of natural growth), and a sustenance agriculture. Amid these conditions, for economic recovery local authorities are trying to make investments in ecological agriculture that could be useful for rural tourism development. In this sense, many studies recommend, for social and economic life boost in rural spaces, rural tourism, which manifests through agro-ecotourism and ecological agriculture (Mureșianu et al., 2010; Filimon et al., 2014).

Regarding tourism attractivity in rural areas, it is distinguished by diversity of landscape, old traditions, anthropic objectives (vestiges, ruins, museums, castles, traditional houses), outdoor activities (Banto & Ambrus, 2010; Lăzuran, 2014).

Rural tourism represents a true economic activity, because plays an important role as a component of a large part of tertiary sector, and in the latest time has become an economic base of rural settlements.

In this way, this form of tourism can be defined as a „*tourist activity hold in rural space, seen in all its complexity. This activity must assure the perpetuation of specific values from this space, but also to satisfy the interest of those who offer tourist services and of those who benefit from this activities*” (Petrea & Petrea, 2001).

Rural tourism, was in 2004, the main subject of *Tourism Strategies and Rural Development* document (OECD, 2001), whose main purpose was to espace the rural zone from an economic downturn. According to it, rural tourism should be implemented in rural areas, should be built upon small scale enterprise, open space, with contact with nature and the natural world, heritage, traditional societies and traditional practices (Wanda et al., 2009).

Such a phenomenon represents a success only when are brought two economic sectors, taking into account its interactions and connections: agriculture which represent the oldest and the main economic branch and tourism which is a new preoccupation and its development was realized in a fast way (Torres et al., 2011).

The option for rural tourism phenomenon is based on several objectives: spending the vacation in other life conditions than the usual ones, the interest for new destinations increasing as a result of educational level raising, the increase of the request of cheap accommodation with reduced level of comfort, cultural and knowledge tourism practicing (for young and old people), the health concern through free air movement and natural food consumption (Nistoreanu, 2003).

The choosing of rural space by modern tourist is explained by desire to leave for a while the urban area and to be closer to nature, but also to the feeling of nostalgia, for those who spent the first part of their life in a rural settlement („*nostalgia*” and „*escapism*”) (Wanda et al., 2009).

Once with the succession of generations, with the irreversible passage of time, the people's mentality passes through an easy or radical change, depending on the environment in which people

develop, on the news related to socio-economic plan of society. Taking place this changes, is obviously that even the mentality of tourist becomes different than the one in the past, being faithful to a particular type of holiday.

In other words, the modern tourist stands out from the traditional one through the fact that he wants to accumulate more and more information, to improve his culture, to have visual contact with as many tourist attractions as he can, to meet new people, with different mentalities, cultures, to discover new lifestyles. The modern tourist is especially attracted by spectacular, unique phenomenon, by those elements of touristic heritage that have a huge level of specificity, authenticity, originality. Moreover, he desires a more diversified journey he wants that the time spent on a holiday to be adorned with different activities.

Table 1. The transition from old to new tourism needs
(Data source: Ban, 2005)

The old needs	The new needs
I want to escape (change the environment)	I want to discover new places and new people
I want to go far away	I want to go anywhere to learn
I want to have time for holiday	Holiday is life, life is holiday
I want to relax	I want new experiences
I want to have fun	I want excitement and mental stimulation

A noteworthy aspect about the features of modern tourist profile is the fact that he doesn't travel only for his experience, but for sharing it also, this aspect being very important for indirect-promotion of the rural area that he visits.³

The characteristics of modern tourist demands are: adeptness, heterogeneity, spontaneity, unpredictability, independence, individualism, his tendency being to getting close to nature and need for learning and acquaintance with new cultures.⁴

Besides the fact that modern tourists are more experienced holiday makers, that there are more destinations to chose, that time is of the essence, that travellers have more information from a variety of media, are more educated and they expect to have more activities, other determinants which influence the tourist demand are demograhic changes and social evolution, increased leisure time and duration of holidays and segmentation of holidays and market segmentation (Pavlic, 2009; Poon, 1993).

With reference to current research topic, the person who practices rural tourism wishes, besides the integration into village life, the participation to different events, to take part to different leisure activities (which implies some complementary programs achievement to complete the main tourist services): excursions, hiking, horse riding, cycling, sports like football, tennis, golf. In other words, a rural environment, to satisfy the modern tourist, must offer, besides the chance to taste from the tranquillity of a natural environment and to eat ecological food, plenty of activities, because the modern tourist modern is an adventurous spirit and he desires to see and experience the unexpected and the unplanned action (Vellas & Becherel, 1995).

All these preferences are based on diferent motivations which are specific to new generation tourist: physical motivations (ensuring good physical condition: fresh and ecological

³ <http://www.likealocalguide.com/blog/the-post-tourist-what-do-modern-day-travelers-and-reality-tv-have-in-common/>

⁴ <http://www.likealocalguide.com/blog/the-post-tourist-what-do-modern-day-travelers-and-reality-tv-have-in-common/>

food, sport, treatment, comfort, protection), interpersonal motivations (the socialization need: the creation of special conditions for meeting other people), intellectual motivations (the participation to different artistic, cultural events, widening the horizon of information), motivations related to status, prestige (the need of appreciation from others, acquiring an image through consumption done), spiritual motivations (freedom, relaxation) (Mortimer & Mathews, 1997).

For reaching the goal of this paper, were used several methods, including the analysis method centered on the current situation of Buda village (considering the possible exogenous and endogenous conditionings of Buda's rural tourism, were analyzed the county and local contextualization, the hypsometry, local community, the local climate, soils, vegetation, fauna, transport infrastructure, local traditions and customs, the local attractiveness tourism elements and those which are located in proximity), the survey method (was realized through questionnaire instrument which tried to highlight the level in tourism knowledge of local population, the perception regarding tourism and the desire of implication; this method is the most essential because each tourism implementation process requires firstly the local community's mentality on tourism phenomenon, then its awareness on the benefits of tourism, in case it is implemented in a village like Buda), the cartographic method (has a role which is becoming more and more important in the research and presentation of touristic phenomenon, representing a spatial and temporal synthesis of it. In what concerns this paper, the cartographic method was used for showing the county and local contextualization, the central position between other relevant tourism objectives situated in Bacău district and for showing the hypsometry in Buda village; this method was also used for determining the suitable areas for climatotherapy, taking into account the hypsometry, the slope orientation, the degree level of slope, and the land use by using *overlay* tool within ArcGis 9.3 software), the graphic method (holds an analytical character and highlights the evolution and structure of touristic phenomenon; within this paper, thanks to Microsoft Excell 2013 software, this method showed, through some charts, the quantitative situation of rural settlements from Bacău County and the Berzunți Commune local community regarding the number of employees and unemployed people).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Following the presentation of Buda's actual situation, as a solution for economic recovery can be considered the implementation of rural tourism, but in such a peripheral zone, the implementation of it becomes a difficult process, because the unprofessional management can cause the lose of local authenticity, and the incomes generated by it could not have direct effects in local economy. In this sense, the tourism represents a sword with two edges, its „*instalation*” requiring, previously, a well structured plan of activities.

The study based on a survey performed in Buda village

For a sure success, this process must satisfy the preferences of modern tourist and must be taken into account the local community, which represents the most important piece of rural tourism process of implementation. In this meaning, a survey was realized through questionnaire instrument which tried to highlight the level in tourism knowledge of local population, the perception regarding tourism and the desire of implication. The survey had 60 respondents aged between 16 and 70 years, two of them having academic studies.

The first question, „*Do you know anything about the rural tourism concept?*” followed to establish if local community is familiar with this concept. The results showed that only 43% of respondents have any idea of rural tourism.

The second question, „*Which one of the next characteristics do you consider that are belong to rural tourism concept?*” contained several range of responses. The major part of respondents chose that it is specific to rural environment (52), takes place in a quiet and relaxing environment (47), involves only dynamic activities (49), and contains fresh and ecological food consumption by tourists (51). In the same time, they omitted to mark answers like „*it assumes a higher contact with nature*”, „*it is a phenomenon that involves the local community*”, „*it involves mobile and static activities*”. However, the chose responses highlighted that many respondents who didn't know the meaning of „*rural tourism*”, answered correctly.

The third question, „*From your point of view, which are the rural tourism benefits for a local community?*” has also several responses, but most of the respondents chose that the main benefits of rural tourism on a local community are: multiple activities (a farmer can have more financial gains not only from obtained harvest, but also from tourists hosting) (51), the preservation of local customs and traditions, or the resuscitation of other which disappeared and the stabilization of local population through securing the local jobs (39). However, they omitted that rural tourism can create new jobs, can be an economic support for farmers and for local small businesses, can encourage cultural exchanges. The conclusions after this question are that Buda's local community doesn't realize the rural tourism phenomenon influences, and its hope and disappointment (in the same time) is local jobs and agriculture investments situation. Moreover, the respondents chose some response variants that don't link with the chosen ones from the first question, this aspect highlighting the fact that many of them completed the questionnaire in a hurry.

The fourth question, „*From your point of view, which are the main tourist attraction of Buda village?*” followed to establish if the respondents are conscious about the tourism heritage of Buda. Most of them chose Saint Sava Monastery (60), and a small number chose the winter customs and traditions (36), then the landscape (21), but none of them chose gastronomy or berries.

The fifth question, „*From your point of view, which are the main tourist attractions from Buda surroundings?*” most of respondents chose mineral water springs from Slănic Moldova (53) and the saline from Târgu Ocna (45). After analysis of these two questions, the conclusions reflect that the respondents are unconscious regarding Buda's tourism potential, and an indirect observation is that this part of local community who took part at this survey, don't practice tourism so often and isn't used to travel for the need to relax, but only for the need of health recovery. That's why, despite the fact that in Buda's surroundings can be found tourist attraction and sights with a high level of authenticity, the respondents stated only curative factors from Slănic Moldova and Târgu Ocna.

The sixth question, „*From your point of view, which are the main problems that Buda village is facing?*” revealed that the local community is worried about the population decreasing (60), the population aging (60), the population migration (60) and the poor condition of the main road (60). Being used with the traditional life, they didn't choose the non-modernized agriculture, the absence of water supply and sewerage. The main problem of them is that the local population is decreasing and that main road is not modernized. Regarding the situation of the main road, the

local community doesn't want a modernized one for own interest. The problem is represented by the complaints of visitors (friends, family members, pilgrims).

The next two questions, „*Do you consider that the implementation of rural tourism in Buda village could be a benefit?*” and „*If Berzunți's local authorities advocated, would you actively participate at its development in Buda village?*” aimed to outline the desire of local community to participate in implementation of Buda's rural tourism. Nobody gave a negative answer, meanwhile 47% agreed with that, and 53% said that it is all one to them. Therefore, more than a half of the respondents would participate at the implementation of rural tourism, even if most of them proved that they are not familiarized with this concept.

The last question, „*if you actively participated at rural tourism development in Buda village, what kind of activities would you undertake?*” aimed to find the direction of activity of local community if Buda's inhabitants would participate in rural tourism implementation. Most of them would host tourists (51), and 22 of them would sell ecological food, the most elementary and common activities in a rural tourism phenomenon. Analyzing the answers can be concluded that they want to carry out activities only on their households. They want to be stable also in the future and they want to perform these activities only in the environment where they have spent their lives.

Determining the suitable areas for climatotherapy practice in Buda village

Following the analysis of the actual situation of Buda village, considering the opportunities and threats, a successful rural tourism must contain a mix of activities.

Buda's bioclimate belongs to indifferent-sedative hills one, which is considered the most suitable for persons whose organisms can not support climatic factors stress (old ones who needs balneary cure for articular pains, children with nervousness conditions, persons who are in acute hepatita, convalescence etc). This type of bioclimat is also recommended for persons who needs to rest and who can't resist excessive heat (Teodoreanu, 1984).

According to the Romania Climatological Atlas and to Elena Teodoreanu, Buda's potential climate has several characteristics: the number of days with thermal comfort is bigger than ten per year, the number of days with discomfort by heating is around 5-10 per year, the number of days with discomfort by cooling is smaller than 5 per year, the number of days with wind shelter comfort is bigger than 15 per year, climatic cutaneous stress stands between 10 and 20 units per year, climatic pulmonary stress stands between 20 and 30 units per year and total bioclimatic stress is situated between 30 and 40 units per year (Teodoreanu, 1984).

On the strength of these climatic qualities, Buda's tourist offer can integrate climatotherapy also, which is recommended to anemias, rheumatic, respiratory and metabolic affections and for physical performance improvement.

In this case, treatment methodology contains aerotherapy (which is realized by way of total or partial body exposure to air action, avoiding sunlight and it includes airbath and air cure), heliotherapy (which represents direct body exposure to air and sun), terrain cure (which represents air and sun exposure by movement on different sloping routes (Teodoreanu, 2004).

The second purpose of this study is to determine the suitable areas for climatotherapy in Buda village using GIS technology, ArcGis 9.3 instrument *overlay* operation. In this case was taken into account several variables like hypsometry, slope, aspect, the soil cover, the use of land, the Euclidean distance from any water source (flowing water, lakes) and from any forest.

In this way, after a vectorization process of contours from a topographic map, were created hypsometric, slope, aspect maps and after a digitizing process, were created pedological, land use, forestry and hydrological maps. In case of hypsometric map, after „*topo to raster*” operation in ArcGis 9.3 instrument was realized a reclassification, adding in table of attributes some values which represent three categories of marks: “1” for low level, “2” for medium level, “3” for high level. Given the fact that the best altitudes for climatotherapy are situated between 300 and 700 meters high, the biggest mark was accorded for this interval, the medium one was accorded for heights higher than 700 m, and the smallest mark was given for heights lower than 300 m.

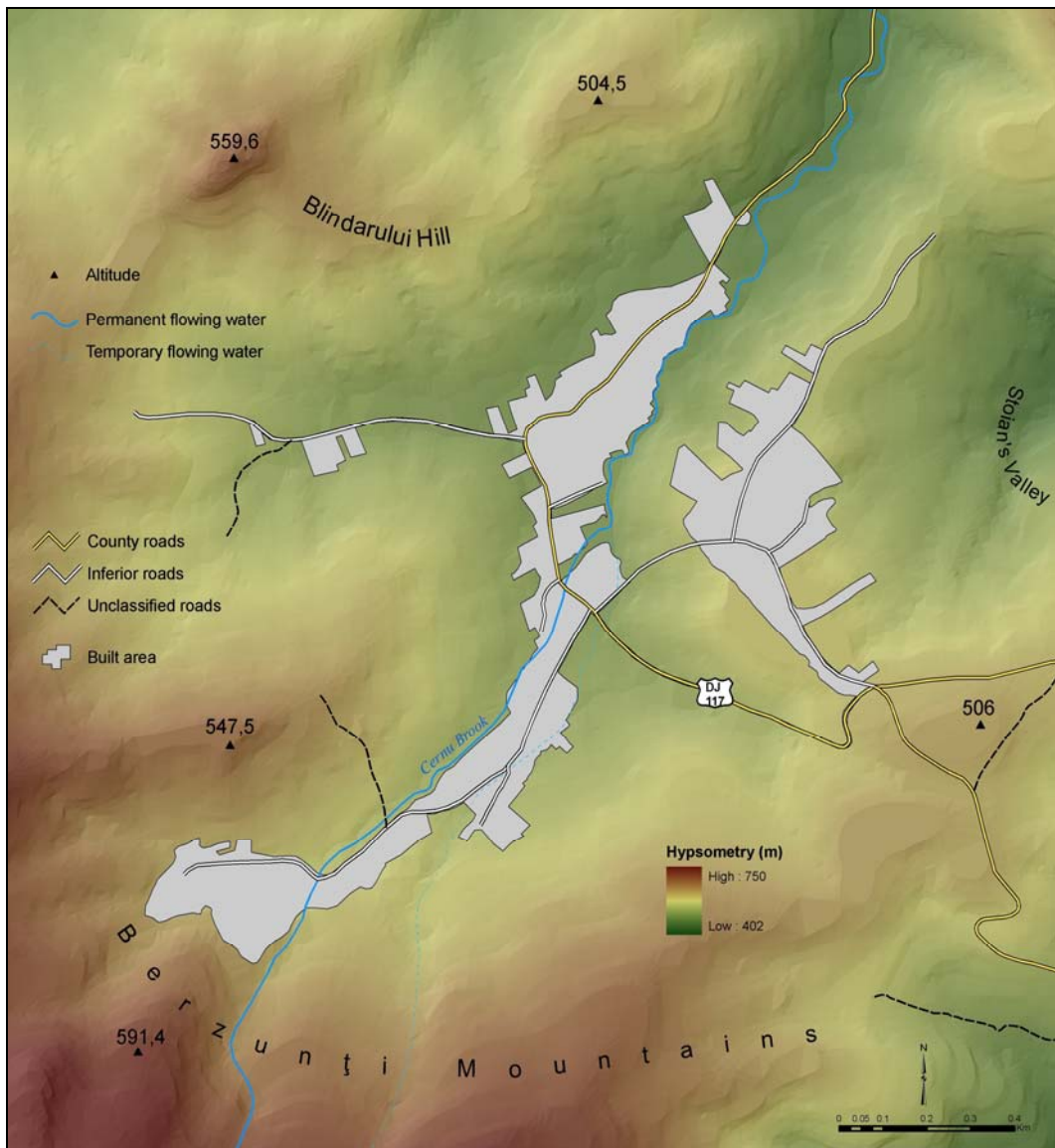


Figure 4. The hypsometric map of Buda village

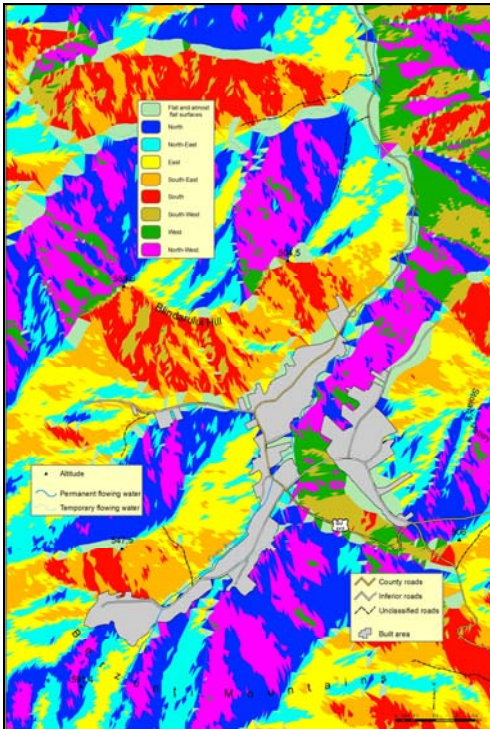


Figure 7. The slope orientation map of Buda village

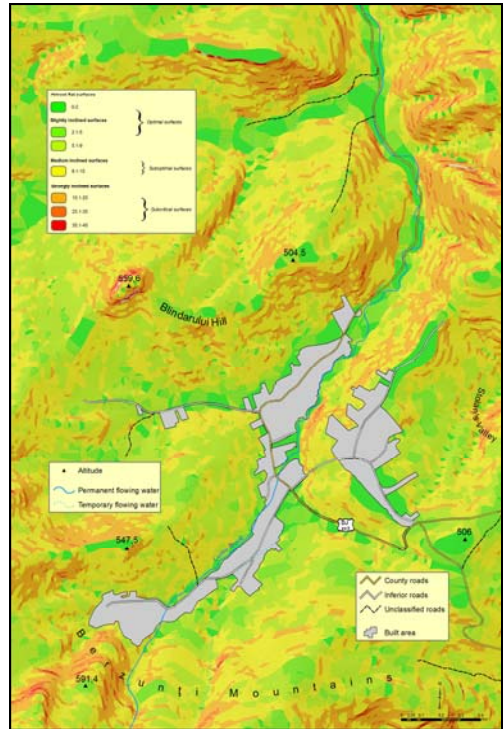


Figure 8. The slope declivity map of Buda village

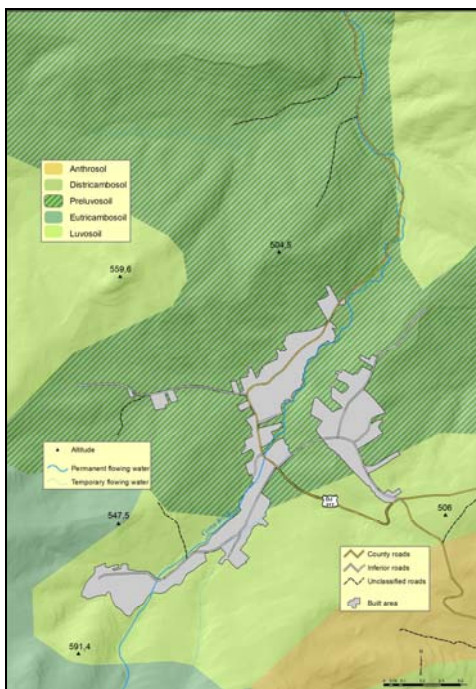


Figure 9. The soil map of Buda village

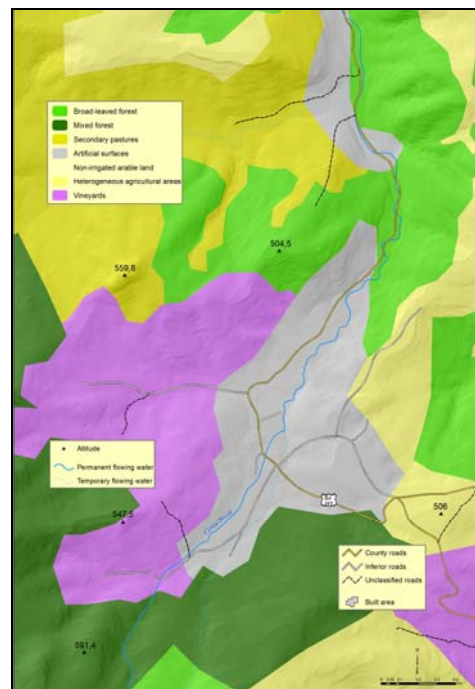


Figure 10. The land use map of Buda village

Regarding the aspect map, the same methodology has been adopted, but the marks were awarded considering the slope orientation. The sunniest slopes being the Eastern, South-Eastern and Southern ones were awarded with the biggest mark, “3”. Then, the North-Eastern and South-Western slopes got the medium mark, “2”, and the Western, Northern and North-Western slopes got the smallest mark, “1”.

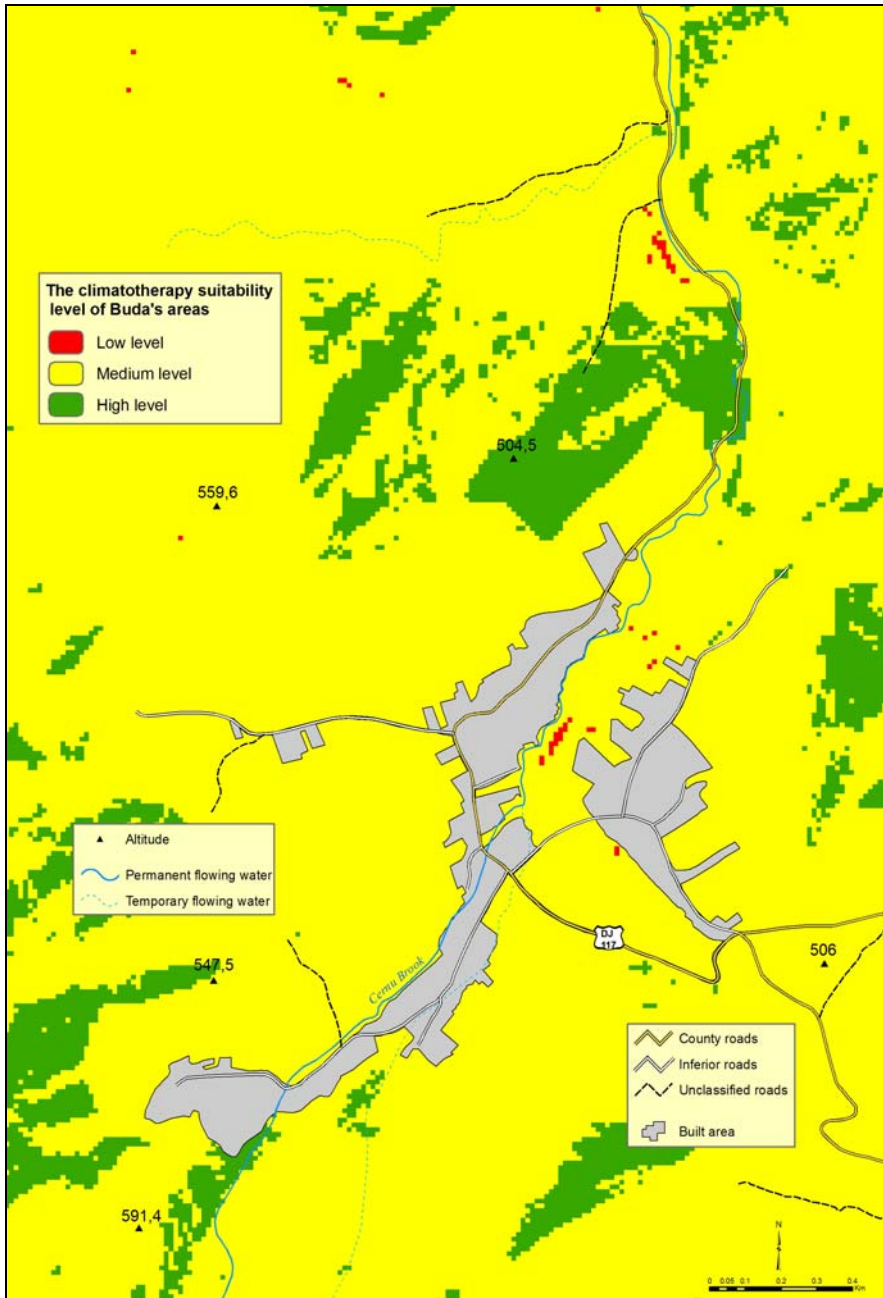


Figure 11. The suitable areas for climatotherapy in Buda village

Considering the slope declivity map, the same range of marks has been fulfilled, but its were awarded considering the slope declivity: optimal (0° - 9°), suboptimal (9.1° - 15°), subcritical (15.1° - 45°). Those three classes of declivity level were associated with “3”, “2”, respectively “1” mark.

In order to reveal the suitable areas for climatotherapy in Buda village, a soil map has been also created, because the pedological shell has an important role in this case through the fact that it has the ability to retain a part of solar heat, and that attribute has big influences on aerotherapy, heliotherapy and terrain cure. Therefore, in granting marks was taken into account the soil capacity of solar heat retaining due to its texture and color. On Buda village’s territory have been identified 5 soil classes, each of its being awarded with a mark: Anthrosoil (1), Districambosoil (3), Preluvosoil (2), Eutricambosoil (1), Luvosoil (1).

Another element taken into account for this aim study is the land use. It was needed because agricultural areas cannot be suitable for climatotherapy. Thus, on Buda’s territory were identified broad-leaved forest and mixed forest (marked with “3”), secondary pastures and artificial surfaces (marked with “2”), and non-irrigated arable land, heterogeneous agricultural areas, vineyards (marked with “1”). For completing this process, the Euclidean distance from a river/brook/lake and a forest was taken into account. Regarding the Euclidean distance from a river or a brook, has been taken into account 15 meters territory length for minimum mark, 10 meters for average mark and 5 meters for the biggest mark. In what concern the forests’ situation, has been taken into account a length of 30 meters for the smallest mark, 20 meters for an average mark, and 10 meters for the biggest mark.

After these operations (maps creation, reclassification, giving marks), was chosen from ArcGis 9.3’s toolbox the overlay operation. In order to complete this command (which is a weighted average), the main duty was to provide for each indicator which was put on the list its share (its importance for determining the suitable areas for climatotherapy). Thus, the overlay command was formed by hypsometry (25%), the use of land (25%), aspect (10%), slope (10%), pedology (10%), Euclidean distance from a water source (10%), Euclidean distance from a forest (10%).

CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of rural tourism in a rural settlement like Buda, with problems like low accessibility, local population with a low level of studies and faced with a decreasing number of inhabitants, is not an easy action, this process assuming a strong analysis of local community and of modern tourist’s profile. The actual situation of local community is important to clarify, because it represents the essential piece of a rural tourism phenomenon is a such rural space. Therefore, this study proposed, through a questionnaire, to find out the local community’s mentality, it’s own conception about rural tourism and it’s eventual implication in rural tourism implementation. Regarding the results, the respondents didn’t understand the meaning of some questions, or they didn’t pay enough attention in choosing the responses, they aren’t confident about rural tourism phenomenon, but they would participate at its implementation due to low income, they want to try something new for financial gaining and they prove to be „*babes in the wood*” and scared regarding acceptance of the NEW. The biggest problem is that they are not familiarized with rural tourism and they need more information. Therefore, they need consultation regarding tourism potential of Buda village, the general benefits of rural tourism and eloquent examples of rural tourism implementation results. Regarding the needs, motivations and desires of modern tourist,

the key of a successful rural tourism implementation is the mix of activities, which gives rise to other forms of tourism. Analyzing the potential of Buda's village, one of the most important form of tourism which can be developed in this area, is curative one, through climatotherapy. In this sense, this study presented an identification mean of areas in Buda village which are suitable for climatotherapy treatments. At first appearance, climatotherapy has nothing to do with rural tourism, but to keep up with the motivations of „*new era*” tourist, the success is granted by the diversification of activities inside Buda's tourism offer.

As a conclusion, the modern tourist is not more attracted by traditional types and forms of tourism. He prefers a mix of activities, an active stay especially on rural tourism, where, except of reliving the traditional and having higher contact with nature, he wants rest, relaxation through recreation and knowledge. He represents that kind of tourist who doesn't want a full, a complete rest, but to face with new experiences. But this (re)adaptation of Buda's tourism offer can be fulfilled only if local community is conscious and wishful to participate in rural tourism implementation.

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