

## **DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION OF TOURISM, AN EXTRA CHANCE IN MAINTAINING AND ASSERTING THE IDENTITY AND SPECIFICITY OF OAȘ LAND**

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to ring the alarm bells regarding what happens in Oaș Land and not only. We all know and see every day that passes, and from the experience of other countries, that globalization does not always imply only progress. For example, its extension, with everything it implies, over an area which is not properly prepared to assimilate it, can lead to regression or in some situations even to the decline of that territory. To overcome such shortcomings in Oaș it is stringently required to identify the optimal strategy to follow, starting from the local realities on the site.

**Key words:** authentic heritage, strategy, exploration, traditional household

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The idea of capitalizing the traditional Romanian village through tourism in order to maintain regional specificity is a necessity in the context of globalization, knowing that the Romanian village, especially in the Oaș Land, is characterized by a high degree of specificity and authenticity. In terms of space Oaș Land is located in north-western Romania, where the Oaș Mountains and the Someș Plain come together, in the homonymous basin, drained by the upper stream of the Tur river (figure 1). Its administrative territory encompasses a number of “33 villages grouped into 11 municipalities and one city that includes the village of Tur” (Ilieș, 2006).

### **METODOLOGY**

This study was conducted in three stages, over which various methods and means of scientific research have been used.

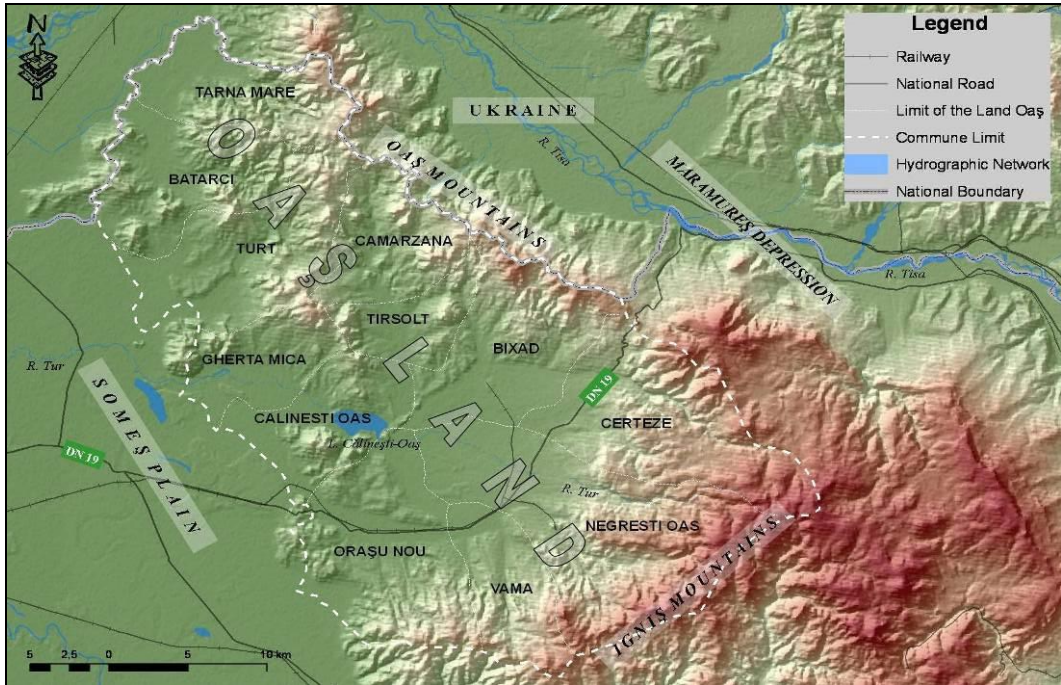
In the first stage, an X-ray of the existing situation was taken, especially of the Romanian traditional authentic heritage, specific to this area, by studying the existing bibliographic and mapping material.

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In the second stage, following the movements of the research team in the field, the information collected in the first stage was confronted with the reality on the site, particularly looking after the main elements that give the lead to the identity and specificity of Oaş Land (household, clothing, dancing, shouting etc.).

In the last stage, based on the materials and information acquired in the previous steps, the actual drafting of this material was started, trying to identify opportunities and possibilities to exploit them through tourism.



**Figure 1.** The physical and geographical location of Oaş Land

### **ELEMENTS OF IDENTITY AND SPECIFICITY**

Following the research made, the following elements have been identified as defining for Oaş: household, clothing, dancing, music and shouting.

#### **The household from Oaş**

The household, standard of the social status in Oaş is represented by the fenced land in the hearth of the settlement where the house, stable, barn and other outbuildings are located. Of the household items above, the house has a particular importance in the life of people from Oaş. Over time it has undergone continual changes in line with the new socio-economic conditions, so that now three generations of houses can be identified in the field.

##### *a) Houses made of oak or beech planks covered with fescue (figure 2)*

Not long ago spread throughout the Oaş Land, the houses of oak and beech covered with fescue are now endangered. This is mainly due to the increase in the inhabitants' welfare lately. The existence of the few houses that we can see now has two explanations, namely: some of them reflect the inability of some people to overcome their social status, to outdo themselves, on the one hand, and on the other hand there is a group of houses that have survived until now thanks to the unfavourable conditions and degree of isolation where they are located.

The fact is that such houses were built before the 20th-century. Their surfaces

are relatively small, with two rooms, an entrance hallway and a living room. The walls of wood planks are plastered with clay and painted with melichrous (Oaş blue). In the south, houses have a small window with two squares, while in the north they have a “ferestuica” (a small glass). The foot of the house is usually placed on a stone foundation plastered with earth. The floor is made of earth. As for the spatial location, one can see that all the houses are oriented east-west lengthwise, with the front and big window facing south.

b) *Houses made of oak or beech planks covered with tile or boarding* (figure 3)

Built in the early 20th century of wood planks, plastered with earth, such houses are spatially located close to the lane, with the road in front and always opposite the stable with barn. The house usually has four rooms, a hallway for entrance, a room for keeping food and two rooms, a neat one for holidays and one for sleeping. Specific for the type of houses is the honey colour of the walls (blue), casting or basis laid on two or three sides and the floor made of earth. The hipped roof is made of wood planks and tiles.

c) *Houses of unburnt bricks or bricks covered with tile built during 1970-1990* (figure 4)

d) *Houses built after the 90's* (figure 5).

They are characterized by excessive size, having a large number of rooms.



**Figure 2.** Traditional house with fescue from Oas, Gherța Mică



**Figure 3.** House made of oak planks, Cămărzana



**Figure 4.** House made of unburnt bricks, Cămărzana



**Figure 5.** Modern house from Lechința, Călinești-Oaș

### **Folk costumes from Oaş**

The folk costumes from Oaş are another element of identity and specificity that gives a specific note of majesty and grandeur to the people from these lands. They are

characterized by a great “chromatic variety and wealth of ornaments” (figure 6 and 7).

They are worn during important religious holidays (Easter, St Mary Major, St Mary Minor, Christmas etc.) and in the key moments which mark people's existence, wedding, baptism, Sheep feast etc. (figure 9).



**Figure 6.** People from Oaş in holiday



**Figure 7.** Female folk costumes



**Figure 8.** Presentation of lads in the church,  
Călinești Oaş



**Figure 9.** Women from Oaş in the church,  
Călinești-Oaş

As for the colours used in clothing we can easily distinguish people's preferences, particularly women's for certain colours. There is a close connection between age and colour of clothing. For example, the colour white which symbolizes purity of mind is worn by little girls (under 14 years), in combination with red and green. Between the age of 14 and marriage, young women prefer green combined with white and red. After marriage they wear red-black with green. Over the years women prefer black and white. Therefore, in Oaş Land, colours are a good indicator of age.

In men, the dominant colours are white and black and are maintained throughout their lives. The colours red and green, found in the female folk costumes, are found in men only in the ornamentation of *clap* (small straw hat) and *straiti* (small shoulder bags) (figure 8).

The decorative motifs that are found in the people's costumes are classical, namely floral and geometric motifs. In terms of style and structure there are great differences between the female and male costumes.

Women's costumes consist of shirt, *pindileu* (dress), *sumna* (peasant dress of hair, cashmere), *zadie* (apron) and *chischineu* (kerchief), *zgarda* (necklace), leather boots and the bride's crown when she gets married (figure 7).

Men's costumes consist of shirt, *gaci* (very full gathered linen trousers), *cioareci* (white tight woollen frieze trousers), *uiosul* (wool clothing), *clap* (small straw hat), boots, *straita* (small shoulder bag), *chimir* (leather belt) and knife.

Currently, people wear the clothes described above during holidays or major events such as: wedding, baptism and death.

### **Music, dancing and shouting**

Another very important element in people's life is music. It is produced by fiddlers (one with the fiddle and one with *zongora* - a guitar with fewer strings). Unique by its rhythm and type, music is always accompanied by dancing and shouting.

Shouting is an original ancestral form of expression of people from Oaş. They shout always and everywhere, on weekdays and holidays, at work and at home. Basically, by shouting they express their joys, desires, failures and sometimes sarcasm (mockery). The motifs found in shouting are: native places, people and life. A very interesting thing regarding shouting is that the text and the message that they convey is open, in continuous motion. Basically two shouts are never the same, which is natural if we consider that shouting is a form of being that reflects people's mood at the moment.

Dancing in two (boy and girl) or in groups (boys wheel) is characterized by winding, beating the rhythm with the feet and frequent changes of pace. Just as shouting, dancing also bears a special note of originality, as it is the creation of legendary characters such as Grigoruț, Vasai, Ion, Nicora etc. You will never see women's dances because men are those who dance and women are asked to join them. Another interesting aspect is given by the relationship between dancing and some localities which the people from Oaş consider important, as polarizing centres of Oaş Land. Dances bear the names of the places where were created and played (the Dance of Turț, the Dance of Certeze, the Dance of Bixad etc.) and of the authors who created them (the Dance of Grigoruț, the Dance of Ionuț, the Dance of Stiopul etc.).

In conclusion, we can say that music, dancing and shouting, along with the households and folk costumes are unique elements with a great ethnographic value that define the Oaş Land and its people.

## **CURRENT STATUS OF CAPITALIZATION THROUGH TOURISM OF THE IDENTITY AND SPECIFICITY ELEMENTS**

So far, the identity and specificity elements in the Oaş Land contributed very little to the development of tourism, thanks to the closed system where this area has evolved. The tourist offer was intended for domestic consumption and to a lesser extent for the external one. For the people of Oaş, the identity and specificity elements discussed above were nothing new.

Therefore the natural resources were exploited first (relief, hydrography, natural springs).

With the opening towards the European Union in recent years, there is a slight emphasis towards capitalization through tourism of the identity and specificity elements. This comes amid the awareness of the ethnic and folk heritage that this area has as a natural reaction to the external demand.

## **CHALLENGES IN THE TOURISM CAPITALIZATION OF IDENTITY AND SPECIFICITY ELEMENTS**

Although it has a wide range of tourist resources, both natural and anthropogenic, Oaş Land is still insufficiently capitalized in terms of tourism. This is largely due to the low education level, given that lately the number of school drop-outs has been continuously growing. The reason for school drop-out is simple, children accompany their parents to work abroad in the hope of a better life.

Another issue hampering the development of tourism is related to the scarcity of the general infrastructure, the tourist one in particular.

The road infrastructure is represented by the national road DN 19, located towards north-south, with a role in interconnecting the Someș Plain, Oaş Land and Maramureș.

Currently, there began the construction work for the “*Oaş Highway*” which will connect the city Negrești Oaş and the towns Bixad, Călinești-Oaş, Gherța Mică, Turț, Târșolț, Cămărzana, with an intersection at Boinești.

The railway infrastructure is poorly represented by the rail Satu Mare-Bixad.

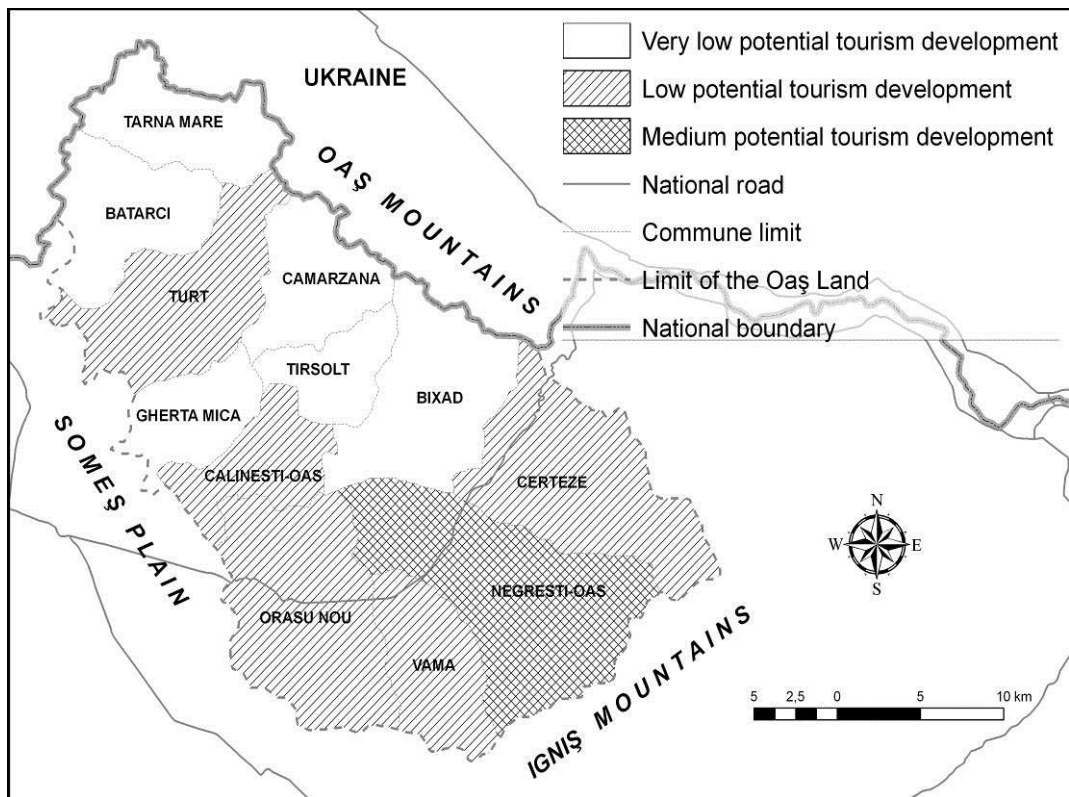
If in the municipality centres of Oaş, the issues of water supply, electricity and sanitation have been largely resolved, the same thing can not be said about the villages belonging to these centres.

Finally, there are major shortcomings regarding the tourism infrastructure, we mean here the existence and quality of accommodation and catering facilities, of the equipment for cure and recreation and the auxiliary ones.

The accommodation facility consists of four units of accommodation classified in two to three stars, with a total of 59 rooms and 123 seats. Reported to the entire land, they represent 6.3 % of the total number of rooms for accommodation, ie 6.4 % of the accommodation places.

With a total of 735 seats (12.3 % of the total number of seats in the county), the catering facility is structured in six catering units classified in two and three stars.

Analyzed in terms of space, the tourism infrastructure is unevenly distributed, being concentrated in the city of Negrești Oaş and its immediate vicinity, Huta Certeze and Mujdeni.



**Figure 10.** The potential for tourism development of Oaş Land

(Source: [http://www.mie.ro/\\_documente/dezvoltare\\_teritoriala/amenajarea\\_teritoriului/patn\\_elaborate/secVI/judete/studii\\_fundamentare.htm](http://www.mie.ro/_documente/dezvoltare_teritoriala/amenajarea_teritoriului/patn_elaborate/secVI/judete/studii_fundamentare.htm))

After analyzing the potential for tourism development in Oaş Land, we can see that globally, this area has a relatively low potential for tourism development. This is

mainly due to the lack of infrastructure, especially the tourism one and of the anthropogenic tourism resources.

Analyzed in terms of administrative units, the potential for tourism development falls into three groups of values, namely:

- very low development potential (Tarna Mare, Bătarci, Cămărzana, Gherța Mică, Târșoț and Bixad);
- low development potential (Turț, Călinești Oaș, Orașu Nou, Vama and Certeze);
- average development potential (Negrești Oaș) (figure 10).

### **MEASURES TO BE TAKEN IN ORDER TO EXPLOIT THE IDENTITY AND SPECIFICITY OF OAȘ LAND**

The main arguments supporting the need to exploit the ethnic and folk heritage of Oaș Land are:

- territory development through tourism in line with sustainable development principles;
- enrichment of tourism offer and its integration into national and international tourist circuits;
- creation of new jobs and rise in living standards;
- increase in school enrolment etc.

To achieve the objectives set out above, a set of measures is urgently required, including:

- public involvement, involvement of local and county authorities in the protection, capitalization and promotion inside and outside the country of the identity and specificity elements;
- involvement of institutions of higher education in creating a tourism exploitation model of the identity elements in Oaș Land;
- granting certain subsidies for rehabilitation and maintenance of rare rural architectural elements specific for Oaș Land;
- attracting investment in tourism etc.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The conclusion that emerges from this study reveals the fact that although the Oaș Land has rich tourist resources, they are poorly fructified in the absence of optimal strategies for their capitalization through tourism. The existence of tourist resources of ethnographic and folkloric nature is an argument, an extra plea to the need of developing tourism in the Oaș Land. Their capitalization would boost the socio-economic level of the area and strengthen the identity and specificity of Oaș Land.

In the scientific literature the problem of authenticity in tourism is not a new topic, being debated extensively by a number of romanian (Ciangă, 2006; Cocean, 2004; Miu, 2008; Ilieș et al., 2008; Ilieș, 2009, Ilieș et al., 2009; Olaru and Ancuța etc) and foreign authors (Murphy, 1994; Timothy and Boyd, 2003; etc). Therefore the present study has a dual nature: on the one hand it contributes to the completion of the studies carried out so far, and on the other hand comes in support of local communities, those from Oaș Land, providing concrete solutions for valorification by tourism of the elements this areal has plenty of (specificity and authenticity).

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