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**IMPROVING THE PERFORMANCE OF LOCAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
MANAGEMENT AS A PREREQUISITE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AREAS  
IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA**

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The Ph.D. thesis and the summary can be consulted at the Republican Agricultural Scientific Library of the Agrarian State University of Moldova and on the ANACEC website.

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## CONCEPTUAL RESEARCH MILESTONES

**Actuality and importance of the topic:** Lucian Blaga said in his poem "The Soul of the Village" that "eternity was born in the village". This statement should correspond perfectly to our country, given the fact that the Republic of Moldova is the country with the largest share of the rural population in Eastern Europe. However, despite this, the unemployment rate in the villages, according to data presented by the National Bureau of Statistics, is almost two-thirds. Year after year, Moldova's population continues to shrink. Moldovan citizens are leaving their homeland because of the lack of jobs and future prospects, and in recent years because of an unfavorable social environment. As a result, villages remain largely deserted, populated only by elderly people who are unable to contribute to the development of rural infrastructure, which is getting worse every year. Impracticable roads, and lack of labor force are just some of the reasons why it is difficult to develop and practice some economic activities in rural localities. For these reasons, poverty is felt in many rural areas, and our fellow compatriots leave abroad, hoping to find a better life in foreign countries. Could this be the eternity Blaga was talking about?

Even the name of the agrarian country is no longer relevant, the agricultural sector provides only about 10% of GDP, the primacy is held by trade, and the population, owners of meadowland, is fed with tomatoes imported from the lush lands of Turkey. In addition, all this is in the process of European integration, which for Moldovans is becoming like the horizon line, close but not yet there.

In this order of ideas, we are under the influence of other rules, not yet known, which must answer the question "How do we ensure permanent economic growth?". Economic growth and the models designed to solve this problem have preoccupied economic history since its beginnings. Models of economic growth have interested economists since the classical period (Adam Smith, David Ricardo). Keynesian models, and their direct descendants, the neo-Keynesians, argue that a stable economy requires the use of macroeconomic policies and direct state intervention. However, another big problem with models designed to explain economic growth and provide scenarios for recovery is the implementation of these models. There are big gaps in knowledge transfer between those who develop the models (academics and researchers) and those who should make the economy work (both governments and businesses). This has been effectively confirmed by the low impact on the development of the sector that the Strategy for 2008-2015 has had. It is, therefore, more than necessary to carry out detailed research into identifying ways of improving the performance of local public administration management in the context of the development of rural areas.

The trends of modernization of LPA management imposed by major changes in society and new approaches to public management require public authorities to implement performance measurement procedures to ensure continuous performance improvement. Numerous efforts have been and are still being made to achieve performance in the public sector to improve the quality of services provided to citizens, ensure a healthy and safe living environment, and ensure the sustainable development of administrative-territorial units. However, many of these efforts have not been successful.

Internationally, the performance of a country's public services is related to the level of public confidence in public administration, the dexterity of the economy, and, of course, the standard of living of the population. In the case of the Republic of Moldova, there is an urgent need for action to increase and multiply the competencies of local and regional government management in order to ensure economic prosperity, cohesion, and social well-being.

The issue of performance transfer from LPA management to rural development is studied not only in Moldova but also worldwide. At the same time, we found a deficiency in the measurement of

these performances, as well as in their general perception, for the simple reason that performance is identified with particular results, clearly superior to the results of similar action. Performance is an attribute that can be treated subjectively, as it is perceived differently by different people, so for the inhabitants of developed countries in the EU area the performance of LPAs is perceived in one way, and for the inhabitants of countries in transition - it is perceived in a completely different way, and here we refer to the minimum level at which it can be ascertained that the LPA has or has not performed.

The Republic of Moldova has been trying for a long time to contribute to regional development by developing various development measures required by Law No. 438 on regional development of the Republic of Moldova or by developing and implementing the National Regional Development Strategy for 2016-2020, as well as approving the Action Plan on the implementation of this Strategy, trying through these actions to reach the level set by the reform of public administration. In this way, the Republic of Moldova aims to align itself with European standards that attribute to local public administration qualities such as transparency, predictability, accountability, and efficiency - qualities that can only be achieved by promoting policies and reforms designed to contribute to increasing the performance of LPAs, a fact supported by research conducted by many representatives of the academic environment to identify possibilities for the development of rural areas in the Republic of Moldova, including through the transfer of LPA management performance. The contribution of local scholars and researchers such as Secieru Angela, Paladi Ion, Popovici Angela, Popovici Corneliu, Sîmboteanu Aurel, Negru Ecaterina, Șaptefrați Tatiana, Tofan Tatiana, Savca Tatiana, Saca Victor is indisputable, Juc Victor, Prisăcaru Veronica, Litvin Aurelia, Zaharco Silvia, Grinciuc Liliana, Varzari Ana - it is to these scholars that we owe the first steps towards reforming and making public administration more efficient. We cannot deny the significant contribution made by the scientific works of foreign authors, including Pollit Ch., Bouckaert G., Simon Herbert A., Thompson V., Smitzburg D., Drechsler W., Kattel R., Eymeri-Douzans J., Aleohin A., Karmolitskii A., Doga V., Androniceanu A., Băileșteanu Gh., Rădulescu C. These works have also served as a catalyst and primary source of information for local researchers, which has significantly increased the contribution made by the academic environment towards identifying possibilities for improving the performance of LPA management.

Improving the management of local government institutions is a highly complex process. The professionalization of the managerial team involves multiple changes, including raising the level of training in the field, mastering the principles of modern management, perfecting the style and methods of working with subordinates and the public, cultivating receptiveness to the new and, last but not least, raising the level of professional and civic awareness of managers. In other words, improving the performance of local public administration management is an intrinsic requirement for the development of the countryside and the local community and a guarantee of the development of society as a whole in the context of European integration.

**The main goal of this research** is to identify the possibilities of improving the performance of the first-level LPA management to transfer it to the development of rural areas in the Republic of Moldova. **The research objectives are to:**

1. Elucidate the implications of new public management models on administrative reconfiguration.
2. Investigate the existing theoretical and methodological foundations regarding the possibilities of assessing the performance of LPA management in terms of its contribution to rural development.
3. Assess the socio-economic viability of the countryside to identify priority directions for its development through the involvement of LPA management.

4. Identify levers to improve LPA management by removing intermediate barriers that prevent the transfer of performance towards rural development.
5. Determine the impact of LPA management performance on rural development imperatives using the feedback method.
6. Develop a mechanism for improving LPA management performance from the perspective of rural development.

**The novelty and scientific originality** of the work lies in the following: establishing the controversies in the conceptual approaches of public administration as catalysts of changes aimed at reconfiguring the administrative system through new models of public management; identifying criteria aimed at determining the impact of the transfer of performance of LPA management on the development of rural areas in the Republic of Moldova; establishing the priority directions of development of rural areas through the diagnosis of the level of development, its characteristics and its affinity with the performance of LPA management; Suggesting levers for improving LPA management performance by elucidating and analysing the intimidating barriers that prevent the transfer of performance towards rural development; developing an evaluation sheet on the impact of LPA management performance on rural development, aimed at identifying internal reserves for improving performance; suggesting a mechanism for improving LPA management performance with a view to rural development in the Republic of Moldova.

**The results obtained, which contribute to the solution of the important scientific problem,** consist of the development of a mechanism to improve the performance of LPA management and a performance evaluation sheet, which will contribute to the efficiency of LPA I activities as a factor stimulating economic growth, to apply management strategies in the sustainable development of rural areas.

**Summary of research methodology and justification of chosen research methods.** In the research process, to achieve the objectives, the author used mainly classical research methods such as explanation, empirical observation, interpretation, quantitative and qualitative analysis, induction, deduction, abstraction, synthesis, comparison, grouping, table method, graphical method, questionnaire method, thematic interview. The selection of research methods was made both in correlation with the objectives set and following the provisions of the methodology of scientific research related to the field addressed.

*The information base of the research* was mainly based on the scientific publications related to the researched field, the normative and legislative acts regulating the research field in the Republic of Moldova, on the data provided by the database of the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova and, last but not least, on the quantitative and qualitative data obtained in the process of interviewing and questioning different categories of respondents such as the representatives of the first level LPAs and the inhabitants of rural localities in the Republic of Moldova.

**The object of the research** is the first level of local public administration.

*Research limits:* In the process of researching the object under investigation, the author encountered numerous limits such as the reluctance of the mayors of rural localities and representatives of central public authorities, which led to the extremely difficult collection of primary data on which the research was based. Another significant limit was the Covid-19 pandemic, which imposed several restrictions that hindered the smooth conduct of the research, as the author was deprived both of the possibility of interviewing and continuously observing the researched subjects and of the possibility of consulting imported bibliographic resources of significant value for the research in question.

**The theoretical significance of the thesis** is to identify methods and mechanisms aimed at increasing the performance of LPA management to transfer this performance to the development of rural areas in the Republic of Moldova.

**The applicative value of the work** derives from the author's proposed scorecard for assessing the impact of LPA management performance on the imperatives of rural development, and from the sustainable development factors identified based on the rural viability study. Given that rural development in most developed countries of the world is the prerogative of local public authorities, the paper assesses the impact of public administration management performance to identify the barriers to the transfer of performance on rural development, which allows the identification of a mechanism for its improvement by identifying certain concrete levers. We mention that these results can be successfully applied both at the theoretical and methodological level by researchers in the field, and at the micro and macro economic level, the proposed evaluation sheet can be used successfully, without any additional costs, by the mayors of rural localities in the Republic of Moldova, and the mechanism for improving the performance of LPA management proposed by the author can be taken over and applied at the country level.

**Approval of scientific results:** the theoretical-methodological and applied results of the research were presented at a number of national scientific-practical conferences such as the International Scientific Symposium "Perspectives of sustainable development of rural areas in the context of new economic challenges", dedicated to the 85th anniversary of the founding of the Agrarian State University of Moldova (Chisinau, UASM, 2018), Practical-scientific conference "Problems and Challenges of the Region's Economy in the Context of Globalization" (Comrat State University, 2018), editions of the scientific-practical conference with international participation "Dynamics of change and organizational culture of the future" (Centre of Excellence in Economy and Finance 2020, 2021). At the international level the research results were presented at the following international conferences: conference "Risk in the contemporary economy", June, Galati, Romania, "Dunărea de Jos" University; conference "Global science and education in the modern realities-2020", August 2020, Washington, USA; conference "Practical significance of modern scientific research-2019", April 2019, Ukraine; conference "Innovative looks into the future-2019", January 2019, Ukraine. The main concepts of the thesis as well as the results of the research have been published in 14 scientific papers published both in national and international collections of articles and monographs. The results of the research have been exploited by the town halls of 3 rural localities through the following actions, confirmed by the implementation acts: use of the methodology for assessing the impact of LPA management on the degree of local development developed by the author; use of the author's proposals and recommendations on the possibilities to improve the performance of LPA management; encouraging the implementation of the steps and actions provided for by the mechanism developed by the author to channel the performance of LPA management towards the development of rural areas.

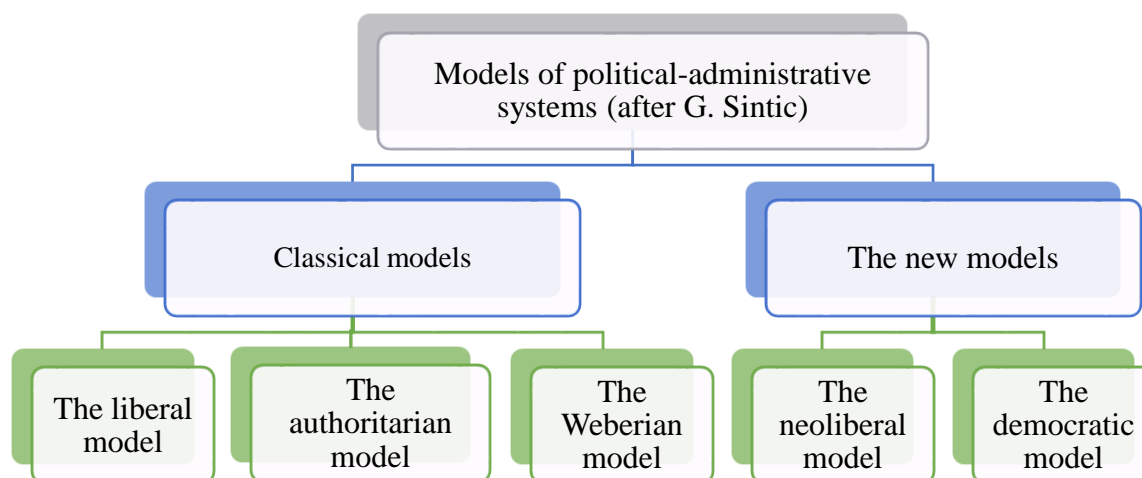
**Summary of the chapters of the thesis:** the aim of the work and the objectives outlined the following logical structure of the thesis: introduction, three chapters, general conclusions and recommendations, bibliography, consisting of 134 sources, 17 annexes, 123 pages of basic text, 19 tables, 40 figures.

## THESIS CONTENT

**Chapter I entitled "Theoretical aspects of the transition of LPA management from genesis to performance"** refers to the evolutionary development of local public administration management, determines the particularities of the existing political-administrative regimes, identifies the implications of new management models on the consolidation of administrative reform - all these actions are aimed at the theoretical approach to LPA management through the prism of its performance, to identify indicators designed to quantify the impact of the performance transfer of LPA management level I on the development of rural areas in the Republic of Moldova.

"Analyzing the vast administrative diversity of European countries, Greek professor T. Tsekos states that "although European states share the same common traditions - free elections, public participation, local self-government, etc. - the structural transcription, however, of this common political heritage, at the administrative level, generates paradigms of the public organization of major diversity" [10, p. 67]. Change management is a critical feature of any administrative model. Thus, not only can the operations of decision making and day-to-day operations vary, but most importantly, change is perceived and directed in totally different ways by different national administrative systems" [16, p. 9].

The diversity of visions and perceptions has generated over time the percolation of several administrative models, which, according to Maurice Duverger, presuppose "abstract, formal objects that can be reflected upon and that help the researcher in understanding concrete, real objects, in establishing and explaining facts based on the discovery of their relationships" [2, p. 1]. Obviously, these models have not escaped scientific analysis, which has often shown that the models "are sometimes found simultaneously" [10, p. 1]. In this context, we can firmly affirm that administrative science is made up of a "dispersed collection" of visions, models of administrative systems that are used "according to the authors' liking, either in isolation or amalgamated within the same analysis through sometimes inexplicable borrowings from theories and models of different origins" [2, p. 1-2]. At the origin of political-administrative systems, according to Gerard Santic, were the classical molds (Figure 1), comprising the liberal model, the authoritarian model, and the Weberian model. These models were subsequently replaced by the so-called 'new models', which include the neoliberal model and the democratic model.



**Fig. 1. Typology of models of organization of political-administrative systems**

Source: Elaborated by the author based on [2, p. 2]

If we were to superimpose classical models, we would get a "simple, orderly, coherent



picture of an instrumental, unitary, pyramidal, hierarchical, centralized administration" [2, p. 14]. Classical models have been subject to much criticism because they make administration an instrument of pure coercion. "It is very clear that the liberal model not only limits the economic functions of the administration, but also admits in the exercise of these functions only the use of means of injunction: prerogatives of public power, and not the concession of benefits, whereas the Weberian model - namely the relationship of domination, which is placed at the heart of any administrative construction" [2, p. 14]. These characteristics have led to contradictions within these models, making their image uncertain and requiring administrative science to reconceptualize them, finding new parameters.

A comparative analysis of political-administrative models over time allows us to highlight their common vulnerability, namely the principle of separation of political and administrative power.

"Sceptics believe that the next models designed to revolutionize administrative management should necessarily represent a mutation of the Weberian model over time, adapted to the conditions imposed by changes in society under the influence of the NPM. We fully share this view, especially in countries with a low level of development and an embryonic democratic system. What is more, there is now talk of a new phenomenon in public administration called the neo-Weberian state (NWS), a model which substantially undermines the position held until recently by the major administrative reformist approach known as New Public Management (NPM)" [6, p. 287]. The NWS is a model that competes with the NPM, being considered a reinterpretation of Max Weber's theory in a European continent-specific approach, and is of interest to researchers in countries with a low level of development, such as ours, for the following reasons:

1. "First, NWS, as an empirical concept has a distinct background in continental European developments and many ways, embodies the European response to economic globalization [4, p. 96].
2. Second, while NWS has a clear empirical origin, in recent years the concept has gained a strong normative significance for middle-income and less developed countries (e.g., CEE), where it serves as a critical reminder that before public administration modernization (such as NPM reforms), a Weberian administrative apparatus is needed that can be modernized.
3. Third, "since NWS is a concept with both empirical and clear normative aspects, it becomes clear that the very concept of public administration modernization or change (and NWS is part of this process) needs serious theoretical development to avoid change for the sake of change, as seems to have been the case with many NPM-inspired reforms" [4, p. 97].

Certainly, any state on the path it proposes to take towards reforming public management will inevitably come up against the need to make functional changes, structured on principles that aim to modernize not just individual aspects but the public administration system as a whole.

At the same time, we believe that in the process of modernizing public administration, the process of managerial reengineering is relevant, which implies a definitive departure from the traditions of the past, especially when all attempts to improve old practices have failed. We believe that all the failures recorded so far by the Republic of Moldova regarding the coherent reform of public administration, the delays, and inconsistencies force a change of attitude by applying "shock therapy", a therapy that must be supported by the state and that must be oriented towards multiplying the performance of LPA management, the author identifying LPA performance management with *a particular result, in comparison with other similar results, of the process of planning, organization, management, and control of LPA activity, characterized by the achievement of the objectives set under conditions of maximum efficiency and effectiveness, with lasting effects and oriented towards the creation of value*

*that is identifiable and recognized as significant by the inhabitants of an administrative-territorial unit, as the final beneficiaries of the result of this action.*



**Fig. 2. Suggestive criteria for assessing LPA management performance**

**Source:** Elaborated by the author

According to Article 14 of the Law on Local Public Administration [1], the transposition of sustainable development principles into local policy documents is the prerogative of local public authorities, has the power to "approve socio-economic development programs" lies with the local council. For these reasons, we conclude that responsibility for rural development lies largely with the first-level LPA, based on its legal prerogatives. Just as socio-economic development starts with the planning process, continues with the provision of physiological needs such as education, food, health, and communal services, followed by transparency in decision-making and permeability of community involvement - all of which can only be ensured if there is a competent team of civil servants - we have taken the liberty of identifying five criteria, which we consider relevant, that could serve as a basis for assessing the performance of LPA management (Figure 2).

We believe that a regular evaluation of LPA management performance, even a self-assessment that only assesses the degree to which objectives have been achieved, will be a significant step towards improving LPAs, and involving the community as evaluators will increase the credibility of the results as well as determine the vulnerabilities of LPA management. We, therefore, suggest that the evaluation of LPA management performance should be implemented at the level of each rural locality, based on legal and unanimously accepted principles, and should focus on the level of achievement of strategic, operational, and even electoral objectives, as well as on the quality and capacity of the LPAs to fulfill their legally established tasks.

In these circumstances, we can only note the sad reality by stating that "if villages have been destroyed by the irrational policy of the state, the state still has a moral and financial obligation to bring them back to life, even if the state is currently organized on different principles and led by other politicians" [5, p. 108].

**Chapter II "Assessing the level of development of rural areas in the Republic of Moldova through the prism of its interdependence with the performance of LPA management"**

is intended entirely to assess the level of development of rural localities to determine priority directions that can contribute to their development. This chapter also identifies the intermediate barriers that prevent the transfer of LPA management performance towards rural development by processing research results.

In the context of the new transformations which have left their mark on all spheres and fields of activity, the concept of 'countryside' remains scientifically insufficiently grounded, including at the applied level. Multidisciplinary approaches to the concept reflect the specific nature of the emergence and development of rural formations, and are both natural and necessary, given the complexity of the term. This ensures clarity and consistency in efforts to define the countryside to identify the underlying multivalent features.

All these approaches reveal numerous characteristics (Table 1), which, in sum, assume all that is rural.

**Table 1. Specific characteristics of the approaches to the concept of "rural areas"**

Nr.	Specific features of the approach:			
	historical	geographical	sociological	economic
1.	The emergence of the countryside.	Geographical location.	Traditions and customs.	Rural economy.
2.	Development and historical evolution of the countryside.	Climatic conditions.	Way of life.	Basic productive forces.
3.	National specificity.	Occupations in the countryside.	Population size and density.	Agricultural and other types of industrial activities.

**Source:** Elaborated by the author based on [15, p. 31]

Thus, the rural area is different from all other areas in a given territory in terms of its components. The most significant differences are in economic structure, population density, dominant professions, culture and cultural buildings, spiritual life, inter-human relations, customs, etc.

In our view, a clear, scientifically based definition of the countryside should be based on all the above-mentioned approaches, defining most of the specific characteristics of the countryside and providing answers to some of the issues of sociological research on the countryside.

We dare to define the countryside as *"a geographical area well determined by its authentic natural components, made up of small settlements, populated by a small number of people united over time by common traditions and customs who make their living mainly from economic activities such as agriculture, forestry, grazing, crafts, handicrafts, practiced conscientiously in order to protect the environment"*.

The role of the countryside in a country's economy speaks primarily about its level of development, and most countries consider it a priority to support rural producers as a key factor in ensuring agri-food independence from other countries. We can say with certainty that the countryside is responsible for the country's supplies, drainage, and economic balance, responsibilities which can only be met if it is an attractive place to live, with good infrastructure, agriculture, and favorable conditions for agricultural and non-agricultural activities and a well-tended natural landscape.

Analyzing the employment rate of the rural population (Table 2), we find that the majority of the rural population is employed in agriculture - 167.2 thousand people in 2020. However, we note a significant reduction in this indicator recorded in 2019 compared to 2018, when the number of the rural population employed in agricultural activities decreased by 254 thousand people, who at best

opted for another field of activity or were left without a stable job. One explanation for this phenomenon could again be the drought of 2020 and the pandemic of 2019.

**Table 2. Dynamics of the employed population by type of economic activity and average for the period 2015-2020, thousands of persons**

Population employed by economic activity	Year					
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, total</b>	381,9	410,9	390,5	452,0	182,8	175,9
Urban	23,5	26,7	22,3	24,9	9,7	8,6
<i>Rural</i>	358,4	384,2	368,2	427,1	173,1	167,2
<b>Industry, total</b>	143,8	148,1	144,4	147,3	128	121,4
Urban	93,8	97,1	92,5	92,6	60,6	57
<i>Rural</i>	54,5	51,0	51,8	54,7	67,5	64,4
<b>Construction, total</b>	65,4	60,9	56,6	59,5	61,4	60,4
Urban	36,1	33,5	30,5	30,4	27,8	25,3
<i>Rural</i>	29,2	27,4	26,1	29,1	33,6	35,2
<b>Trade, hotels, and restaurants, total</b>	189,6	199,6	208,8	194,4	163,8	148,4
Urban	139,0	150,1	154,1	137,8	107,1	56,7
<i>Rural</i>	50,6	49,5	54,7	56,6	95,7	52,7

**Source:** Elaborated by the author based on data from the Statistical Yearbook of Moldova 2020 [17, p. 240-241] and data provided by the Statistical Data Bank, available online at: <https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/ro/>

At the same time, we identify that the number of rural people who have opted for a job in the construction sector, since 2017, is continuously increasing, reaching 35.2 thousand people in 2020, this being the only branch of the national economy in which the number of the employed population in rural areas is increasing. If a comparison is to be made with the urban environment, there is a reduction in the number of people employed in all areas of activity.

In the following, we aim to identify the average salaries offered to employees by field of activity in order to identify the most attractive branch. Statistical data identify the industrial sector as the sector with the highest average wage payment (9493.1 lei in 2020), which is the essence of the industrial-centric theory of economic development. According to this view, agriculture cannot develop without industry.

So, the industry is the driving sector and agriculture is the sector that needs to be put in motion. It is hard not to recognize the advantages of this theory, given that industry provides agriculture with the most modern production methods, the fruit of mechanics and especially chemistry, as well as supplying primary demand through the processing of agricultural products. However, it is regrettable to acknowledge that agriculture is the worst paid branch, with employees in this sector earning on average 6072.6 lei in 2020, which is below the average wage forecast for the same period - 7953 lei. Moreover, agriculture is the only branch whose remuneration does not reach the level of the average remuneration in the republic.

Also, here we would like to note the wages offered in construction which are not much lower than those offered in the industry. In 2020, an employee in the construction sector will earn an average salary of 9389.1 lei, which is only 104 lei less than in the industrial sector. This explains the migration of rural employees from agriculture to the construction sector.

The importance of population in the development of any country is undeniable, but the role of the rural population is particularly important, especially since it accounts for 56.9% of the total number

of people registered in 2019 (Table 3). However, we are forced to acknowledge that the number of rural population per country in the period 2015-2019 shows a significant decrease of 32.7 thousand people. If we are to analyze the annual reductions in the rural population we see that they occur regularly, thus in 2016 compared to 2015 the rural population decreased by 5.9 thousand people, in the period between 2017 and 2016 the villages lose another 7.9 thousand people, which is a 34% over the level of 2015-2016. In 2018, compared to 2017, the rural population decreases by another 8.5 thousand people, to lose another 10.4 thousand in 2019. Unfortunately, we cannot analyze the statistics for 2020 because the Statistical Yearbook no longer publishes the population numbers by the environment, but the figures published by the country for 2020 and January 2021 are alarming in terms of catastrophic population reduction.

The population in urban areas, however, is still growing, increasing by 20.2 thousand people between 2015 and 2020.

The same is true if we look at the share of the population by living medium. A country that recently boasted a significant share of the rural population is in danger of reaching the point where these two figures are equal or the share of the urban population exceeds the share of the rural population. Thus, over 5 years the rural population share has decreased by 0.7%, while the urban population share has increased over the same period by 0.9%. Analyzing the rate of decline in the rural population, we dare to assume that in 25-30 years the rural will give way to the urban in terms of the total population.

The continuing decline in the rural employment rate is also disappointing, with a reduction of 3.8% over the period 2015-2021, which is well below the same rate in urban areas. If the employment rate in rural areas is 35.1% in 2020, it is 44.4% in urban areas.

**Table 3. Dynamics of demographic indicators recorded in the Republic of Moldova in the period of 2015-2020**

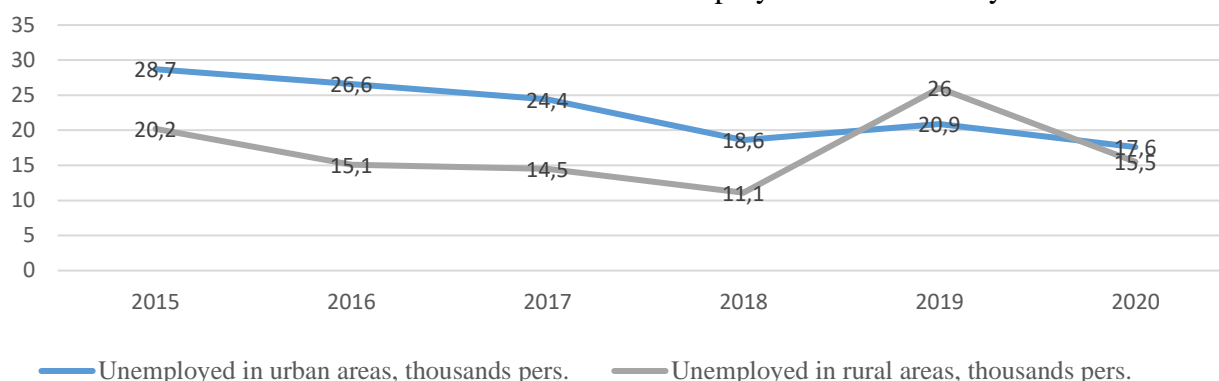
Indicators	Year					
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
A total number of population, thousands of pers.	3555,2	3553,1	3550,9	3547,5	3542,7	2640,4
Population in urban areas, thousands of pers.	1507,3	1511,1	1516,8	1521,9	1527,5	-
Share of urban population, %	42,4	42,5	42,7	42,9	43,1	-
Population in rural areas, thousands of pers.	2047,9	2042,0	2034,1	2025,6	2015,2	-
Share of rural population, %	57,6	57,5	57,3	57,1	56,9	-
Urban employment rate, %	42,0	42,3	41,9	40,9	47,0	44,4
Rural employment rate, %	38,9	39,7	39,3	42,8	36,6	35,1

**Source:** Elaborated by the author based on the Statistical Yearbook 2019 [17, p. 37, 63] and data provided by the Statistical Data Bank, available online at:

[https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/ro/30%20Statistica%20sociala/30%20Statistica%20sociala\\_03%20FM\\_03%20MUN2019\\_MUN010/MUN110200.px/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774](https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/ro/30%20Statistica%20sociala/30%20Statistica%20sociala_03%20FM_03%20MUN2019_MUN010/MUN110200.px/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774)

Under these conditions, it is curious to note the reduction in the number of unemployed people in rural areas, which in 2020 will be 15.5 thousand people, i.e., 10.5 thousand less than in 2019 (Figure 3). The same can be seen in the situation of the unemployed in cities, whose number has also decreased in the same period by 3.3 thousand people. Here again, we are forced to note the effects of the pandemic in that until 2019 the number of unemployed registered in rural areas was constantly below the number

of unemployed in urban areas, in 2019 it recorded a significant increase, and in 2020 - an equally significant reduction. If it is natural that the largest share of the unemployed should go to people with no schooling (10.6% primary school or no schooling), then why should 1.2% of the unemployed with higher education in rural areas in 2020 and 2.5% of the unemployed with secondary education?



**Fig. 3. Dynamics of the number of unemployed by background during 2015-2020**

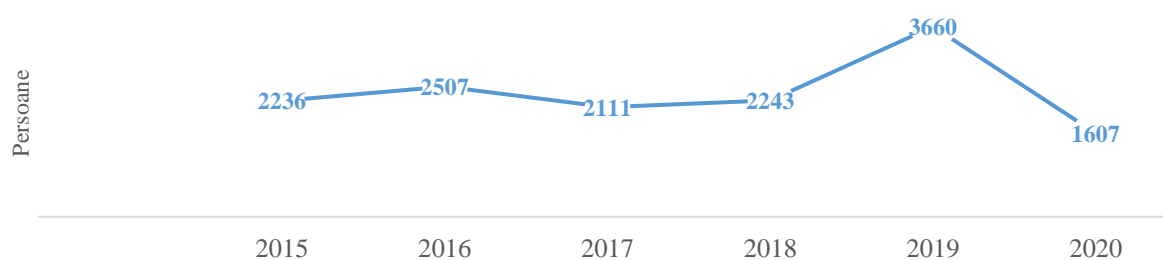
**Source:** Elaborated by the author based on data provided by the Statistical Data Bank, available online at:

<https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/ro/>

How then do we dare to say that rural localities are short of qualified personnel when they are part of the unemployed category? We dare to assume that qualified staff, rather than taking low-paid work, would rather join the ranks of the unemployed. The current state of affairs is increasingly dissatisfying the rural population, who are leaving in droves to go abroad in the hope of finding well-paid work. Statistics for 2020 show that most people leaving in search of work are aged 25-34 (327 people), followed by people aged 35-44 (319 people), i.e. mainly young, employable people are leaving the country.

The year 2019 is marked by a significant wave of migration, a year in which the population, driven by the socio-economic problems caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, chose the foreign route. Thus, a total of 3660 people emigrated this year (Figure 4), including 2463 people aged between 15 and 54, with the largest share of people aged between 15 and 44.

The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic were particularly felt on the living standards of the population, highlighting increasing poverty, leaving more and more people without a stable source of income, as well as without the basic foodstuffs that people in the villages used to grow in their gardens, for the simple reason that the pandemic did not come alone, it was followed by a dry summer that caused significant damage to farmers, literally bringing them to their knees and demonstrating once again their helplessness in the face of nature's challenges.



**Fig. 4. Number of emigrants from the Republic of Moldova in dynamics for the period 2015-2020, (persons)**

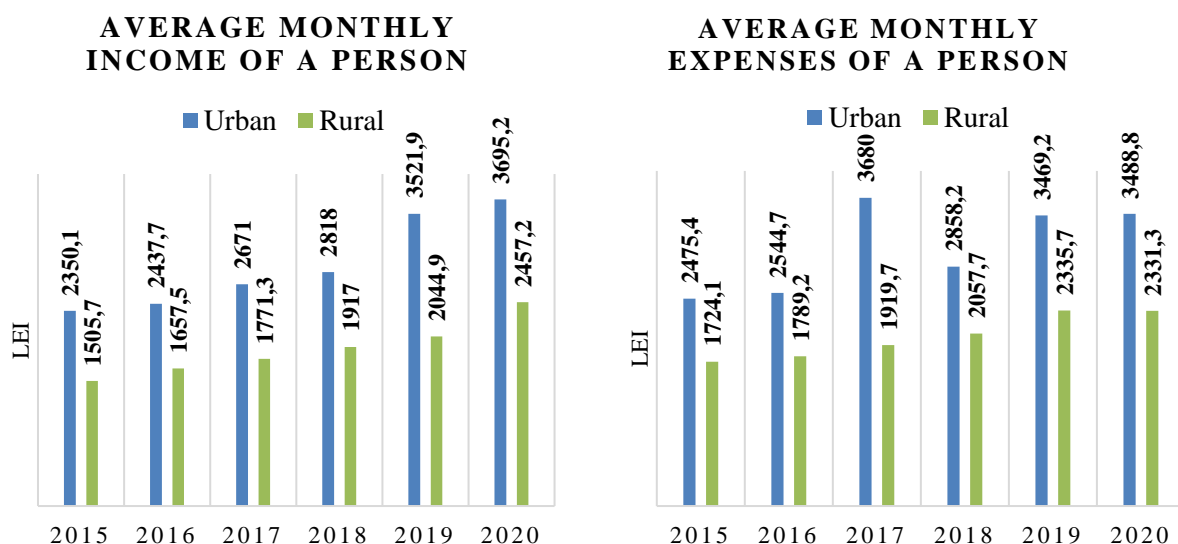
**Source:** Elaborated by the author based on data provided by the Statistical Data Bank, available online at: [https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/ro/20%20Populatia%20si%20procesele%20demografice/20%20Populatia%20si%20procesele%20demografice\\_POPPrec\\_POP070/POP070400rcl.px/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774](https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/ro/20%20Populatia%20si%20procesele%20demografice/20%20Populatia%20si%20procesele%20demografice_POPPrec_POP070/POP070400rcl.px/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774)

In order, however, to establish the objective level of living of the population in rural areas and to elucidate the reasons for accepting unskilled work abroad at the expense of skilled work at home, we will now analyze the income and expenditure of the population by residence.

Thus, the largest share of income recorded by the rural population in 2020 is accounted for by wage income - 40.5%, followed by income from social benefits - 20.7% and remittances - 16.1%. It is curious, however, that in an agrarian country the share of income from the individual agricultural activity is lower than the share of income from remittances, which in 2020 is 15.2%. In this context, we can say with certainty that the rural population earns its living either from wage income or from income from social benefits and remittances, their joint share being 36.8%, which is only 3.7 percentage points below the share of wage income.

At the top of the list of expenses incurred by rural people in 2020 are the expenses related to the purchase of food - 47.2%, followed by the purchase of clothing - 9.3% and the maintenance of the house - 5.7%. Naturally, Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of needs is still valid. Further proof of the viability and validity of this theory is the fact that for health care, the countryman, having no choice but to make do with what he does not have, spends about 4.1% a year, while for education he spends less than 1% or 0.5%. We are astonished to see that the rural population spends more money on leisure (1.2%) than on education.

The list of curiosities, which we allow ourselves to consider paradoxical, does not end there. If we compare the level of income and expenditure recorded annually by the environment, rural and urban, we see a striking discrepancy, even though the rural population exceeds the urban population.



**Fig. 5. Dynamics of monthly income and expenditure per inhabitant by residence for the years 2015-2020, (lei)**

**Source:** Elaborated by the author based on data provided by the Statistical Data Bank, available online at: <https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/ro/>

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Analyzing the figures presented in Figure 5, we see a slight increase in the dynamics of the population's income in 2020 compared to 2019, but also a significant difference between the level of this indicator in cities and villages. For the year 2020, the income recorded in urban areas exceeds the income in villages by 1238 lei or 50.38%. Analyzing the income dynamics for the years 2015-2020, we can see a more pronounced increase in the income received in urban areas in 2019 compared to 2018, when the income of the population in cities increased by 25% and that of the population in villages by 6.7%. For people in villages, a more significant increase in income was recorded in 2020 compared to 2019, a year in which the income of the rural population increased by 20.16%.

Strangely, the average monthly expenditure of a rural person in 2020 compared to 2019 was reduced by 4.4 lei, which is not significant, but in comparison with the 20% increase in income, it raises unintentional questions.

We note, however, that the level of income barely exceeds the level of expenditure incurred in 2020 (by 125.9 lei), and people in the countryside can afford to spend on average 328.5 lei more than the subsistence minimum (2002.8 lei for 2020). The question arises involuntarily, what do people live on in Moldova? How does it manage to exist when it can't afford anything more than 328.5 lei? Moreover, if we look at the minimum subsistence level for 2020, we wonder what a family with three children can live on, which according to statistics requires an income of 10061 lei if the average maximum wage in the industry is 9493.1 lei, and in agriculture only 6072.6 lei. And here we should mention that 2020 is the only year in the period analyzed (2015-2020) in which the income of the rural population exceeds expenditure. And here again, we assume that these are data from the pandemic that has taught the population to live or rather to exist with nothing and from nothing, limiting themselves to the consumption of goods and/or depriving themselves of other necessities such as education, culture, health, and this is an unacceptable, but authentic for the harsh reality faced at the present stage the Republic of Moldova.

Naturally, the population of the Republic of Moldova satisfies its physiological needs, but it is curious that the list of so-called "physiological needs" that the population of our country cannot do without includes alcoholic beverages and tobacco. And if the population can limit to the maximum its financial resources invested in education and other necessities, it cannot do without these vices. Statistics show that in 2020 the country's population will invest 3.5 times less in education than it



spends on tobacco and alcohol (Table 4).

**Table 4. Dynamics of average monthly expenditure per person on alcohol, tobacco, and education for the period 2015-2020**

Year	Average monthly expenditure per person on alcohol and tobacco, lei		Average monthly expenditure per person on education, lei	
	Urban Medium	Urban Medium	Urban Medium	Urban Medium
2015	31,4	26,7	18,3	9,4
2016	37,6	27,1	20,7	9,7
2017	38,4	29,5	14,4	10,1
2018	41,9	35,3	17,2	7,6
2019	57,0	46,0	54,9	15,9
2020	76,5	41,3	35,0	11,9

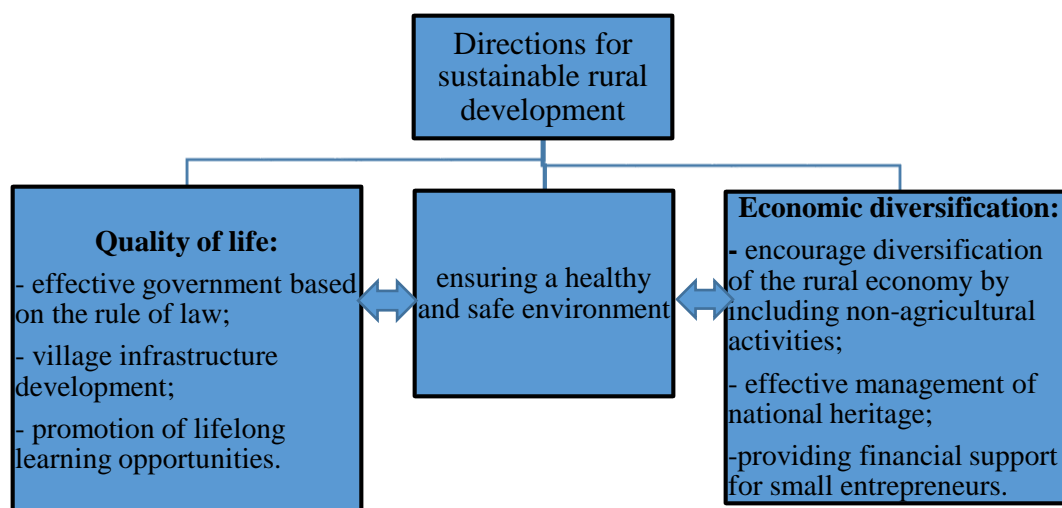
**Source:** Elaborated by the author based on data provided by the Statistical Data Bank, available online at:

[https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/ro/30%20Statistica%20sociala/30%20Statistica%20sociala\\_04%20NIV\\_04%20NIV%202019\\_NIV020/NIV020200.px/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774](https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/ro/30%20Statistica%20sociala/30%20Statistica%20sociala_04%20NIV_04%20NIV%202019_NIV020/NIV020200.px/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774)

If we compare the same indicators recorded in urban areas with those in rural areas, we are astonished to see that the urban population also prefers alcohol and spends twice as much on it. We would point out that expenditure on alcohol and tobacco in rural areas has a positive dynamic, decreasing only in 2020, presumably as a result of the pandemic, and that investment in education is both increasing and decreasing. In such circumstances, we can only see how right Dimitrie Bolintineanu was when he said that 'the country will be what the school is'.

Under these circumstances, instead of continuing to publish scathing statistics and trumpet loudly and clearly on all the television channels about the desolate situation in which rural localities find themselves, the need to intervene, as little as possible, with concrete measures for the development of rural areas is becoming even more acute.

The author concludes from his research into the specific features of rural areas in the Republic of Moldova and the many problems faced by the rural population that the crucial importance of rural development for the Republic of Moldova can be reduced to two priority areas, namely quality of life and economic diversification (Figure 6), the achievement of which will help to ensure a healthy and safe environment.



**Fig. 6. Priority directions for sustainable development of the Republic of Moldova**

**Source:** Elaborated by the author based on the National Development Strategy "Moldova 2030" [8]

Given that the transposition of sustainable development principles into local policy documents is the prerogative of local public authorities, the author has identified from the outset several barriers that hinder the transfer of LPA performance towards rural development. Thus, among the main barriers and challenges faced by local public administration the following were identified:

1. **Lack of financial resources** - "the problem of decentralization of local finances remains, local public authorities are not flexible enough to be fully self-supporting. Achieving effective financial autonomy at the local level means reducing the role of the central government in determining the amount and categories of tax and non-tax revenues at the local level, in the use of local revenues (i.e. in setting priorities for targeting and making expenditures) and in exercising administrative coordination over the tax apparatus at the local level" [3, p. 9].
2. **A high degree of politicization**, politicization is defined as "an action by which political significance is given to a situation lacking this characteristic; it is an abusive practice of attributing a political character to phenomena that do not have such a character" [9, p. 358].
3. **The imperfection of the legal framework**, refers both to the lack of a well-defined legal framework and to the lack of legislative acts that are extremely necessary for the efficient work of local public administration.
4. **Limited administrative capacity** - although the administrative decentralization procedure was initiated a long time ago, its effects are still waiting to be seen, and the principle of decentralization, local autonomy, and subsidiarity, are ensured only at the declarative level. In the framework of administrative decentralization "the state no longer assumes the task of administration alone, but shares it in certain quotas with other categories of legal persons of public law, which in the case of the Republic of Moldova are represented by districts, municipalities, cities, communes and villages" [13, p. 162].
5. **The lack of professionalism** of a significant proportion of staff means that particular attention needs to be paid to the recruitment and training of staff, as the value of the public sector is not only in terms of its material and financial resources but in particular its human potential. The human factor plays a decisive role in bringing about any change through "the attitudes and skills that are characteristic of it, in increasing efficiency in process management and communication, in planning, in coordination" [11, p. 66].

6. We note, however, that all the problems identified by local government representatives have resulted in **total indifference on the part of the population**, manifested by a lack of interest and non-involvement in community issues. Local interests can and must be defended only by the members of this community because they are the ones who know best the local needs and possible development opportunities, they are the ones for whom the given locality is their native locality, it is the locality with which they are linked by a host of events and memories, for these reasons the right to make decisions and act jointly in community-level issues is a prerogative of the community, and the community must be drawn by various methods into the local decision-making process.

**Chapter 3 "Levers and mechanisms to improve the performance of LPA management for rural development in the Republic of Moldova"** aims to make an applied contribution by developing and applying an assessment of the impact of LPA management performance on rural development imperatives, by identifying and putting forward concrete proposals/methods for improving LPA management and by designing and presenting a mechanism for improving LPA management performance.

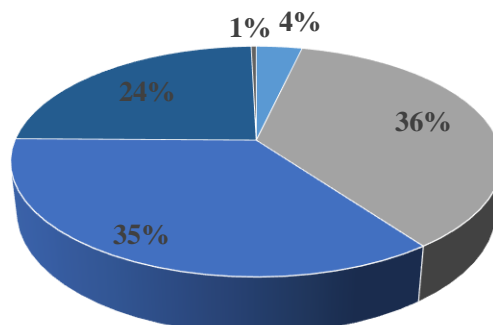
Feedback is the source of information on performance, which allows the employee to adjust his results" [30, p. 25], and is thus rightly considered an objective method of evaluation, especially in the context in which it is provided by the final beneficiaries of the services provided by the employee. In order to assess the performance of LPA management to identify its weaknesses, we resorted to the actual questionnaire of the inhabitants of rural localities in the Republic of Moldova. The questionnaire was designed in digital format, using the Google Forms application. It should be noted that initially the questionnaire was designed for a proportionally stratified sample of 15 people from 10 rural localities, divided into 3 age categories as follows: 5 young people aged 18-25 years, 5 adults aged 26-60 years, and 5 elderly people over 61 years. But in the process of distributing the questionnaire things got out of hand, as the people involved in the questionnaire, showing an enormous desire to help and support, randomly forwarded the questionnaire to relatives and acquaintances in several rural localities. Thus, we have to admit that the questionnaire was applied to a simple random sample of 250 respondents of different ages, all of whom met the basic sampling criterion of being inhabitants of rural localities in the Republic of Moldova.

The questionnaire contains 10 questions, the first question being an open-ended question, to specify the rural locality, the other questions being closed questions, both single-answer and attitudinal scales (Annex 13). When establishing the attitudinal scale, semantic differentials were chosen, based on the legally prescribed ratings ("Very good", "Good", "Satisfactory", "Unsatisfactory"), to ensure comparability of the data and Linkert's scale ("Total agreement", "Partial agreement", "Partial disagreement", "Total disagreement").

The first open-ended question asked about the level of development of the rural locality to which the respondent belongs (Figure 7) to subsequently determine the impact of LPA management performance on it.

### What is the level of development of your village/commune?

- Strongly developed
- Developed
- Sufficiently developed
- Poorly developed
- Below the limit of existence



**Fig. 7. Assessment of the level of development of rural localities in the Republic of Moldova**

**Source:** Taken from the report generated by Google Forms

Thus, of the 250 respondents, the majority say they live in a developed municipality - 36.4% and fairly developed - 35.2%. 24.4% of respondents said they live in a poorly developed municipality, followed by those who say they live in a highly developed municipality - 3.6%. From the sample that participated in the questionnaires, only one person claims to live in a rural locality that is below the level of development.

The same question was also asked to the mayors in order to ensure comparability of the answers given and to ensure objectivity, at least at the level of perception.

Strange or not, out of the sample of local councillors, only one person still considers that the locality they lead is "below the limit of existence", while 56% of local councillors consider that they lead sufficiently developed localities.

We then set out to quantify the responses by applying the score from 1 to 4 and determining the final score (Table 5), which we also applied to the evaluation of the primary responses. Interestingly, despite a significant share of options for the developed and highly developed level, the rural area is still rated as "satisfactory", which is also confirmed by the feedback from the primaries - a final score of 2.06 points, which also corresponds to "satisfactory".

Given that the impact of the transfer of LPA management performance on the development of rural areas is rated "satisfactory", it is clear that there are unused internal reserves intended to help improve LPA management performance to achieve "outstanding results compared to other results of the same kind". In these circumstances, we believe that the actions outlined in the NRDS are based on the principles of endogenous development theory, propagated in particular by J. Friedmann and W. Stöhr, because of its essential characteristics such as territorial development, local resource development, and community development.

**Table 5. Determination of the final score to assess the level of development of rural areas in the Republic of Moldova**

Options offered by the attitudinal scale	Number of respondents	Option score	Total accumulated score
Strongly developed	9	4	36
Developed	91	3	273

Sufficiently developed	88	2	176
Poorly developed	61	1	61
Below the limit	1	-1	-1
<b>Total:</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>545</b>
<b>Final score: 2.18 points</b>		<b>Qualifier: Satisfactory</b>	

**Source:** Elaborated by the author based on data from Google Forms Report

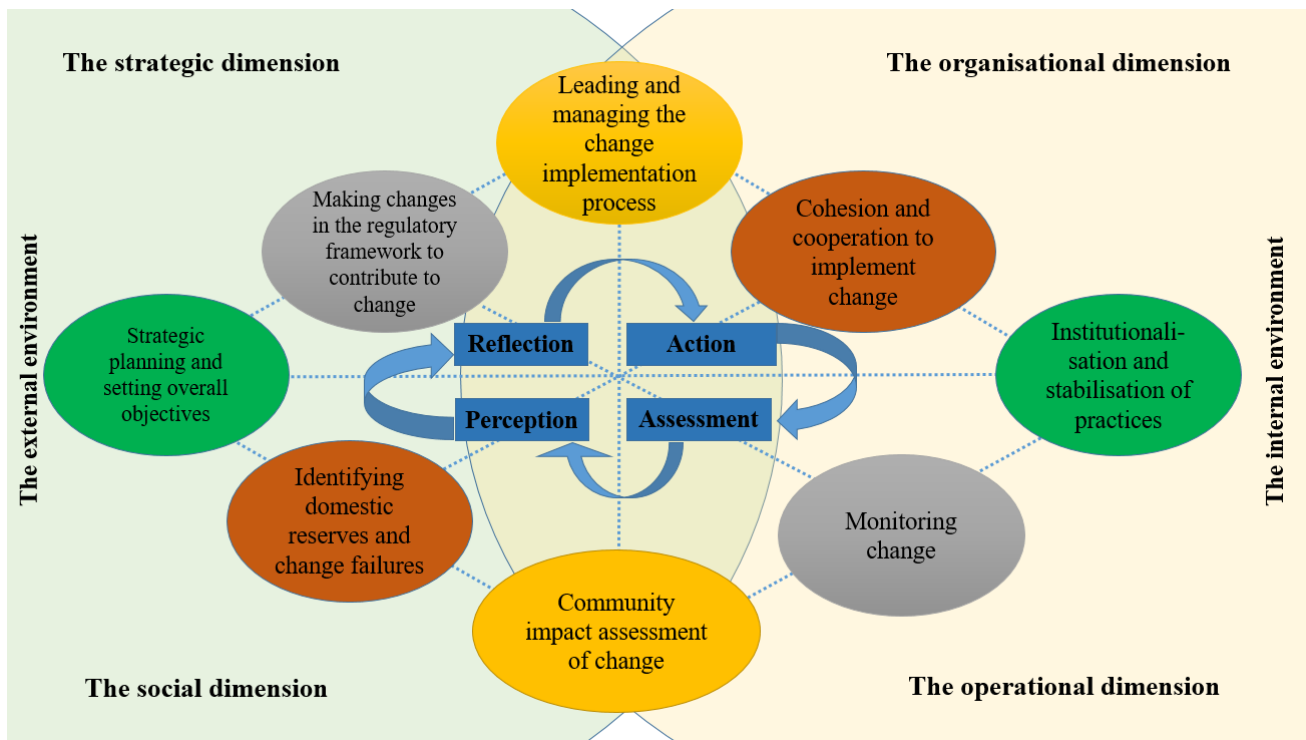
We are firmly convinced that development is the result of the active participation of the entire population, endogenous development is impossible without the existence of sufficiently democratic structures, which would allow the free expression of the will of the people in terms of voicing their wishes. It is for these reasons that the formation of a change-oriented mindset among local communities becomes an imperative for local public administrations.

Weber, however, sees a qualitative difference between community and other forms of human association, the association is based solely on common interests, while the community is based on the awareness of traditional or subjective-affective belonging, which makes it capable of acting and self-organizing.

Community development is a relatively recent approach in the Republic of Moldova, having been taken over from the regional development programs implemented by the European Union, including the desire to encourage the LEADER approach "which provides for the mobilization of local authorities and citizens to strengthen the economy and improve access to public services in rural areas, with the LAGs being the driving force behind this approach" [12, pp. 198-199]. It should be noted here that the application of LEADER as a local development instrument has led to the implementation of numerous projects that have contributed to job creation and infrastructure development in villages.

However, at present, "community development in the Republic of Moldova faces a large number of problems which are generated by the reduced capacity of the administrative system to initiate and support local development processes, as well as by the reluctance of local communities to become actively involved in the development process" [7, p. 80].

To this sense, the author has developed a mechanism (Figure 8) to contribute to the continuous improvement of LPA management by involving community evaluation. We believe that the community is the most appropriate evaluator for LPAs for the simple reason that the community is also the beneficiary of the services provided by the LPA. We also point out that the community is the core and driving force of a rural community that can contribute to the implementation of certain rural development policies or acts as an inhibitor in the development and promotion of the latter.



**Fig. 8. Mechanism for improving the performance of LPA management with a view to rural development**

**Source:** Elaborated by the author

The mechanism proposed by the author interweaves the external environment with the internal environment, the strategic dimension with the operational dimension, and the social dimension with the organizational dimension. The basic idea is the interconnection between the external environment and the interconnections between the strategic and operational and social and organizational dimensions. These dimensions are not only interconnected, but they also intertwine with each other.

The Mechanism proposes to initiate the process of change from the strategic breadth of this change by setting a national-level objective that would refer to the need to enhance the performance of LPA management in order to develop the rural space of the Republic of Moldova. Subsequently, concrete actions should be outlined to contribute to the achievement of this objective by removing the barriers identified by the mayors, which we discussed in the previous chapter.

The mechanism is based on the idea that all the barriers identified by mayors, including lack of financial resources, excessive politicization, imperfect legal framework, limited administrative capacity, lack of performance, and public indifference, can be removed by removing a single barrier, namely the imperfect legal framework. Concerning eliminating politicization and increasing the performance of LPA management, it would be sufficient to elect mayors based on a competition organized on legal principles, principles that refer to a certain level of skills held, managerial experience, etc. Increasing administrative and financial capacity can again be achieved by supplementing the legislative framework with a matrix of tasks of central and local public administration, including concrete delimitation of functions and responsibilities of central and local public administration, supplementing/revising some provisions of the tax code to give first level LPAs the right to introduce their local taxes and charges, the elimination of ceilings on these taxes and charges, the granting of the right to allocate the road tax directly to the account of the local budget in charge of the road, the assessment of revenues omitted by local budgets with a view to the granting of certain tax incentives by the State, the administrative-territorial reorganization according to

demographic and territorial criteria.

The given barriers, being removed by changes in the legislative framework, will certainly reduce the mistrust of the population towards local elected officials and will contribute to the increase of community involvement in local development actions.

The next stage of the mechanism developed concerns the leadership and management of the change process to establish clear tasks and responsibilities of the parties involved in the process. It is at this stage that the strategic dimension is interwoven with the operational one, by involving the organizational dimension. Here we refer to the fact that the organization, in our case the municipality, is to show cohesion and cooperation both internally and externally to implement change. The internal environment is of course responsible for institutionalizing and stabilizing practices as well as monitoring the process of implementing change. A change could be implemented both through the existence of strategic and operational planning at the local level and through concrete mechanisms to monitor the implementation of actions to stabilize these practices.

**Table 6. Extract from the MODEL SHEET  
for assessing the impact of LPA management performance on the development of rural areas  
in the Republic of Moldova using the feedback method**

Assessment criteria	Calculation of the total accumulated score	Final score
<b>I. Quality of strategic planning</b>		<b>2,86</b>
<b>II. Capacity and quality of services provided</b>		<b>2,76</b>
2.1. Quality of municipal services		2,66
2.2. Quality of social services		2,79
2.3. Quality of administrative services		2,84
<b>III. Financial Capacity</b>		<b>2,96</b>
3.1. Quality of management of public funds	$4*51+3*151+2*36+1*12=741$	2,96
3.2. Capacity to generate revenue and attract funds	$4*62+3*128+2*49+1*11=741$	2,96
<b>IV. Permeability of Community involvement and transparency of the decision-making process</b>		<b>2,80</b>
4.1. Community involvement in the decision-making process	$4*62+3*116+2*53+1*19=678$	2,71
4.2. Transparency of work	$4*51+3*104+2*67+1*28=721$	2,88
<b>V. Quality of human resources</b>		<b>2,90</b>
<b>Final average accumulated score:</b>		<b>2,86</b>
<b>The qualifier:</b>		<b>Good</b>

Source: Elaborated by the author based on data from Google Forms Report

The social dimension, as a representative of the external environment, is interwoven with the internal environment and the operational dimension of the organization through the process of community evaluation of the impact of change. In this regard, the author developed and applied the LPA management performance assessment questionnaire.

The results of the assessment have already been described in the content of this paper and recorded in the LPA management performance assessment form by the inhabitants of the village/commonwealth which is presented in Table 6.

The evaluation sheet of the impact of change, in our case of the degree of transfer of LPA performance in the development of rural areas, is intended to reveal the internal reserves for improving the performance of LPA management, and thus the vulnerabilities of LPA management in order to identify new solutions and levers for its improvement, continuously adjusting this performance to the interferences of the time.

Thus, this mechanism becomes a cyclical one, valid over time, with the possibility of continuous self-improvement, respecting precisely the stages of implementing a change: change perception, reflection, action and evaluation - stages specific to any change process, including managerial reengineering.

The relevance of the mechanism is also ensured by the interleaving and interdependence of the stages on a diagonal (stages marked with the same color). Here we refer to the pairs formed between strategic planning and institutionalization of best practice, leadership, and coordination and community evaluation, making legislative changes and monitoring compliance with these changes, cohesion and cooperation, and establishing internal reserves through community involvement.

## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the process of the *investigations carried out in order to identify the possibilities of improving the performance of LPA level I management in order to transfer them to the development of rural areas in the Republic of Moldova*, the author can formulate the following **conclusions**:

1. In the process of *elucidating the implications of the new public management models on administrative reconfiguration*, which was the direct aim of the first research objective, we note that LPA management has undergone unprecedented development, particularly since the Second World War, with the influence of French doctrine remaining decisive in European countries. The influences and implications of the new management models have undeniably left their mark on the process of administrative reconfiguration in chronological order, with good practices being taken over from each political-administrative model. However, the results of the research have shown



that pure administrative models cannot be written exactly in the patterns of one or another country, as they need to be adjusted to the specificities of each country, and managerial reengineering of public administration is an inevitable and necessary process in the European course of our country.

2. *Investigating the existing theoretical and methodological foundations on the possibilities of assessing the performance of LPA management in terms of its contribution to the development of rural areas*, it was found that in the process of addressing performance from the perspective of several authors, performance is approached both through the prism of efficiency and effectiveness, but also through elements of competitiveness. In this regard, some gaps were identified in the current legislation in the sense of the lack of a possibility to quantify the impact of LPA management performance on rural development, the indicators provided by the legal framework referring only to the evaluation of human resources, with the higher hierarchical body serving as an evaluator, which we believe reduces the objectivity of the evaluation. In this regard, the author proposed a set of criteria for assessing the impact of LPA management performance on the development of rural areas in the Republic of Moldova, namely:
  - the quality of strategic planning;
  - capacity and quality of services provided (communal, social, and administrative services);
  - financial capacity;
  - permeability of community involvement and transparency of decision-making;
  - the quality of human resources.
3. *Assessing the socio-economic viability of rural areas to identify priority directions for their development through the involvement of LPA management*, it was found that the rural economy, based on agriculture and the processing of agricultural and non-agricultural products, is insufficient and in continuous decline, resulting in a marked degree of underdevelopment and a significant gap with the urban environment, but also with the European countryside. The employment rate in rural areas is steadily declining, while income levels barely exceed expenditure levels. Under these conditions, the population is forced to live, or rather to exist, on nothing and out of nothing, limiting itself to the consumption of goods and/or depriving itself of other necessities such as education, culture, and health, which is unacceptable, but true to the harsh reality that Moldova is currently facing. For the Republic of Moldova, rural development is currently a priority, which aims to implement an integrated policy that will make it possible to harness all types of potential existing in rural areas: livestock farming, agriculture, processing of agricultural products, crafts, rural tourism, agri-tourism, traditions, etc.
4. *In the process of identifying levers to improve LPA management by removing intermediate barriers that prevent the transfer of performance towards rural development*, it was found that one of the basic levers that can contribute to improving LPA management performance is the revision of the legal framework, which is also a significant external barrier to the transfer of LPA management performance towards rural development. This would certainly help to eliminate the politicisation of the civil service by promoting professionalism and meritocracy, and to increase administrative and financial capacity by identifying concrete and clear tasks, again based on the law. These measures will certainly increase the confidence and involvement of the population in community actions, which will contribute to the development of rural areas in the Republic of Moldova.
5. *At the stage of determining the impact of LPA management performance on rural development imperatives using the feedback method*, it was found that the evaluation sheet developed and implemented by the author provided relevant and sufficient information to be able to determine the

impact of LPA management performance on its contribution to rural development, and the feedback provided by the stakeholders (the need and importance of evaluating the performance of LPA management were demonstrated, especially by the rural population as the final beneficiaries of public services to ensure the relevance and objectivity of the evaluation) made it possible to identify internal reserves for improving LPA management performance.

6. In the process of *developing the mechanism for improving the performance of LPA management in the context of rural development*, the author has made use of the theory of endogenous development and its essential characteristics: territorial development, local resource development, and community development. The relevance and functionality of this mechanism are ensured by the inter-and intra-connectedness of its component elements, as well as by the cyclical nature of the mechanism, which ensures its continuity in the application and the possibility of self-improvement.

In the process of seeking solutions to the important scientific problem of *creating mechanisms to improve LPA management, which will contribute to the efficiency of its activities as a factor stimulating economic growth, in order to apply management strategies in the sustainable development of the rural sector*, we propose the following **recommendations**:

1. We propose that the Regional Development Strategy should focus in particular on measures designed to contribute to the development of the infrastructure of rural localities and that the economic development of these localities should be channeled towards the diversification of the economy and the promotion of non-agricultural activities designed to contribute to the enhancement and promotion of the national heritage, such as rural tourism and handicrafts, activities that can be practiced by small entrepreneurs.
2. We suggest that the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry implement measures to compensate farmers for the material damage caused by natural disasters and to help regulate diesel prices.
3. We urge both the representatives of AIPA and the representatives of international organizations to review the basic requirements for project applications in order to simplify them by reducing the number of documents required or by providing information support when preparing applications to ensure access to these funds/funding sources also for people in rural areas who do not necessarily have skills and experience in preparing funding proposals.
4. We recommend supplementing the Law on Local Public Administration with provisions to require that mayors eligible to participate in local elections be selected on meritocratic (not political) principles, based on education, professional skills, and communication skills, including in foreign languages, etc. It would also be necessary to stipulate clear criteria to identify the minimum requirements for a given position and to revise the job descriptions for each level of public administration.
5. We suggest supplementing the Law on Central Public Administration with provisions aimed at clearly establishing the limits of the administrative tutelage exercised by the CPAs by expressly delimiting the relationship between PCAs and LPAs, including the distribution of the functions exercised by them by drawing up task matrices.
6. We recommend the CPA apply incentive measures that would condition the activity in the field of public administration for a predetermined period, such as the payment of a fixed capital upon employment for young specialists who, in return, are obliged to work in the town hall for 3 years or the provision of housing during their stay or the partial compensation of the contract for studies in the part-time section for people working in town halls. We believe that these things would be

easier to implement if they were supported and promoted at the central level, either through cooperation agreements with educational institutions, or by returning to the old practice of delegating young specialists who have completed their studies from the state budget to work in the territory for a fixed period, or by allocating sums to cover the cost of renting accommodation for people recruited from other localities, or to provide a fixed initial capital paid conditionally to young people on employment.

7. We propose a review of the criteria for administrative-territorial organization, especially in communes and villages in the Republic of Moldova. In this regard, we consider it appropriate both establish clear territorial and demographic criteria that are unanimously accepted and to draw up and approve the rules for the establishment and recognition of a rural locality by supplementing the current provisions of the Nomenclature of Territorial Statistical Units of the Republic of Moldova, for example, the minimum number of 5,000 people under the jurisdiction of a rural municipality/locality.
8. We suggest delegating the right to set local taxes and charges and the ceilings for these taxes to local government through tax legislation, provided that the tax burden does not fall on small entrepreneurs, a condition to be stipulated by law. In the same vein, we consider it appropriate to allocate the road tax directly to the local budgets in charge of roads. All these measures would contribute to the decentralisation of financial resources at local level and would significantly reduce the value of the facilities granted by the state to local budgets to cover losses from omitted revenues.
9. We recommend the development and implementation of a general framework for monitoring and evaluation of the work of LPAs both by CPAs according to the degree of achievement of the objectives set out in local development strategies and plans, the existence of which should be required by law, and by the local community according to the following criteria: quality of strategic planning, capacity, and quality of services provided, financial capacity, the permeability of community involvement and transparency of decision-making and quality of human resources.
10. We suggest that municipalities in rural areas use the methodology of assessing the impact of LPA management performance on rural development through the community feedback method, aggregating the results in the model sheet proposed by the author, in order to identify internal reserves for improving their own performance. We consider the evaluation of LPA management performance by rural residents through the feedback method as a simple method of establishing impact, which does not involve additional costs and can be easily applied by any municipality in any rural locality.
11. We encourage both the public administration and other interested beneficiaries to apply the mechanism for improving the performance of LPA management developed with a view to the development of rural areas in the Republic of Moldova, given the cyclical nature of the mechanism, which ensures continuity in its implementation and the possibility of self-improvement.

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## ADNOTARE

**Fetescu Cezara. Sporirea performanței managementului administrației publice locale ca premisă a dezvoltării spațiului rural din Republica Moldova.**

**Teză de doctor în științe economice. Chișinău, 2022**

**Structura tezei:** introducere, trei capitole, concluzii și recomandări, bibliografie din 134 titluri, 17 anexe, 123 de pagini de text de bază, 40 figuri, 19 tabele. Rezultatele obținute sunt publicate în 14 lucrări științifice.

Cuvinte-cheie: performanță, funcționar public, dezvoltare, management, administrație publică, spațiu rural, evaluare, impact.

**Scopul lucrării:** identificarea posibilităților de sporire a performanțelor managementului APL de nivelul I în vederea transferului acestora în direcția dezvoltării spațiului rural din Republica Moldova.

### **Obiectivele cercetării:**

1. Elucidarea implicațiilor pe care le au noile modele de management public asupra reconfigurării administrative.
2. Investigarea fundamentelor teoretice și metodologice existente privind posibilitățile de evaluare a performanțelor managementului APL prin prisma contribuției sale la dezvoltarea spațiului rural.
3. Evaluarea viabilității socioeconomice a spațiului rural în vederea identificării unor direcții prioritare de dezvoltare a acestuia prin implicarea managementului APL.
4. Identificarea unor pârgii de perfecționare a managementului APL prin intermediul înlăturării barierelor intermediare ce împiedică transferul de performanțe în direcția dezvoltării spațiului rural.
5. Determinarea impactului performanțelor managementului APL asupra imperativelor dezvoltării spațiului rural prin utilizarea metodei feedbackului.
6. Elaborarea unui mecanism de sporire a performanțelor managementului APL în perspectiva dezvoltării spațiului rural.

**Noutatea și originalitatea științifică a lucrării** rezidă în următoarele: stabilirea controverselor în abordările conceptuale ale administrației publice ca catalizatori ai producerii schimbărilor menite să reconfigureze sistemul administrativ prin intermediul noilor modele de management public; identificarea criteriilor menite să stabilească impactul transferului de performanțe al managementului APL asupra dezvoltării spațiului rural din Republica Moldova; stabilirea direcțiilor prioritare de dezvoltare a spațiului rural prin prisma evaluării nivelului de dezvoltare, caracteristicilor acestuia și interdependenței sale cu performanțele managementului APL; sugerarea unor pârgii de perfecționare a performanțelor managementului APL prin elucidarea și analiza barierelor intermediare ce împiedică transferul de performanțe în direcția dezvoltării spațiului rural; elaborarea unei fișe de evaluare a impactului performanțelor managementului APL asupra dezvoltării spațiului rural, menite să identifice rezervele interne de sporire a acestora; sugerarea unui mecanism de sporire a performanțelor managementului APL în perspectiv dezvoltării spațiului rural din Republica Moldova.

**Rezultatele obținute care contribuie la soluționarea unei probleme științifice importante** constau în elaborarea unei metode de evaluare a performanțelor managementului APL și proiectarea unui mecanism menit să contribuie la sporirea acestor performanțe, fapt care va contribui la eficientizarea activităților sale în calitate de factor stimulator al creșterii economice, în vederea aplicării strategiilor manageriale în dezvoltarea durabilă a spațiului rural.

**Semnificația teoretică** constă în identificarea unor metode și mecanisme menite să contribuie la sporirea performanțelor managementului APL în vederea transferului acestor performanțe asupra dezvoltării spațiului rural din Republica Moldova.

**Valoarea aplicativă a lucrării** derivă din fișa propusă de autor pentru evaluarea impactului performanțelor managementului APL asupra imperativelor dezvoltării spațiului rural, cât și din factorii de dezvoltare durabilă delimitați în baza studiului viabilității spațiului rural. Lucrarea evaluează impactul performanțelor managementului administrației publice cu scopul identificării barierelor ce stau în calea transferului de performanțe asupra dezvoltării spațiului rural, fapt ce permite delimitarea unui mecanism de perfecționare a acestuia prin identificarea anumitor pârgii concrete.

**Implementarea rezultatelor științifice:** Rezultatele cercetării științifice au fost diseminate atât în cadrul conferințelor naționale și internaționale, cât și în articolele publicate în revistele de specialitate. Recomandările sugerate, mecanismul de sporire a performanțelor managementului APL și fișa de evaluare elaborate au fost valorificate de 3 primării din localitățile rurale din Republica Moldova.



## АННОТАЦИЯ

**Фетеску Чезара. Повышение эффективности управления местной публичной администрацией как необходимое условие развития сельских территорий в Республике Молдова.**

**Докторская диссертация по экономике. Кишинев, 2022**

**Структура диссертации:** введение, три главы, выводы и рекомендации, библиография из 134 наименований, 17 приложение, 123 страниц основного текста, 40 рисунков, 19 таблиц. Результаты опубликованы в 14 научных работах.

**Ключевые слова:** эффективность, государственный служащий, развитие, управление, государственное управление, сельская местность, оценка, воздействие.

**Цель работы:** определить возможности повышения эффективности управления МПА первого уровня для передачи его на развитие сельских территорий в Республике Молдова.

### **Цели исследования:**

1. Прояснить последствия новых моделей государственного управления для административной реконфигурации.
2. Исследовать существующие теоретические и методологические основы относительно возможностей оценки эффективности управления ЛПА с точки зрения его вклада в развитие сельских территорий.
3. Оценка социально-экономической жизнеспособности сельской местности с целью определения приоритетных направлений ее развития с привлечением руководства МПА.
4. Определить рычаги для улучшения управления МПУ путем устранения промежуточных барьеров, препятствующих передаче результатов деятельности в направлении развития сельских районов.
5. Определить влияние эффективности управления МПУ на императивы развития сельских территорий, используя метод обратной связи.
6. Разработать механизм повышения эффективности управления МПУ в перспективе развития сельских территорий.

**Научная новизна и оригинальность** работы заключается в следующем: установление противоречий в концептуальных подходах государственного управления как катализаторов изменений, направленных на реконфигурацию административной системы через новые модели государственного управления; выявление критериев, направленных на определение влияния передачи эффективности управления ЛПУ на развитие сельских территорий в Республике Молдова; установление приоритетных направлений развития сельских территорий через диагностику уровня развития, его характеристик и его связи с эффективностью управления МПУ; Предложение рычагов для улучшения эффективности управления МПУ путем выяснения и анализа устрашающих барьеров, препятствующих переносу эффективности на сельское развитие; разработка оценочного листа влияния эффективности управления МПУ на сельское развитие, направленного на выявление внутренних резервов для их улучшения; предложение механизма улучшения эффективности управления МПУ с целью сельского развития в Республике Молдова.

**Решение особенно значимой научной проблемы**, заключается в разработке метода оценки эффективности управления МПУ и создании механизма, призванного способствовать повышению этой эффективности, что будет способствовать повышению эффективности его деятельности как фактора, стимулирующего экономический рост, с целью применения управленческих стратегий в устойчивом развитии сельского сектора.

**Теоретическая значимость диссертации** заключается в определении методов и механизмов, направленных на содействие улучшению эффективности управления МПА с целью переноса этой эффективности на развитие сельских территорий в Республике Молдова.

**Практическое значение работы** вытекает из предложенного автором листа для оценки влияния эффективности управления МПА на императивы сельского развития, а также из факторов устойчивого развития, определенных на основе исследования жизнеспособности сельских территорий. В работе оценивается влияние эффективности управления государственной администрацией с целью выявления барьеров для передачи эффективности на развитие сельских территорий, что позволяет определить механизм ее улучшения путем выявления определенных конкретных рычагов.

**Внедрение научных результатов:** Результаты научных исследований были распространены как на национальных и международных конференциях, так и в статьях, опубликованных в специализированных журналах. Предложенные рекомендации, механизм повышения эффективности управления ЛПА и оценочная карта эффективности были использованы 3-мя муниципалитетами в сельских районах Республики Молдова.

## ANNOTATION

**Fetescu Cezara. Improving the performance of local public administration management as a prerequisite for the development of rural areas in the Republic of Moldova.**

**PhD thesis in economics. Chisinau, 2022**

**Thesis structure:** introduction, three chapters, conclusions and recommendations, bibliography of 134 titles, 17 annexes, 123 pages of basic text, 40 figures, 19 tables. The results are published in 14 scientific papers.

**Keywords:** performance, civil servant, development, management, public administration, rural area, evaluation, impact.

**The main goal of this research** is to identify the possibilities of improving the performance of the first level LPA management in order to transfer it to the development of rural areas in the Republic of Moldova.

Research objectives:

7. To elucidate the implications of new public management models on administrative reconfiguration.
8. To investigate the existing theoretical and methodological foundations regarding the possibilities of assessing the performance of LPA management in terms of its contribution to rural development.
9. To assess the socio-economic viability of the countryside with a view to identifying priority directions for its development through the involvement of LPA management.
10. Identify levers to improve LPA management by removing intermediate barriers that prevent the transfer of performance towards rural development.
11. Determine the impact of LPA management performance on rural development imperatives using the feedback method.
12. To develop a mechanism for improving LPA management performance in the perspective of rural development.

**The novelty and scientific originality** of the work lies in the following: establishing the controversies in the conceptual approaches of public administration as catalysts of changes aimed at reconfiguring the administrative system through new models of public management; identifying criteria aimed at determining the impact of the transfer of performance of LPA management on the development of rural areas in the Republic of Moldova; establishing the priority directions of development of rural areas through the diagnosis of the level of development, its characteristics and its affinity with the performance of LPA management; Suggesting levers for improving LPA management performance by elucidating and analyzing the intimidating barriers that prevent the transfer of performance towards rural development; developing an evaluation sheet on the impact of LPA management performance on rural development, aimed at identifying internal reserves for improving performance; suggesting a mechanism for improving LPA management performance with a view to rural development in the Republic of Moldova.

**The important scientific problem solved** reside in the developing of a method for assessing the performance of LPA management and designing a mechanism designed to help improve this performance, which will contribute to the efficiency of its activities as a factor stimulating economic growth, with a view to applying managerial strategies in the sustainable development of the rural sector.

**The theoretical significance** consists in identifying methods and mechanisms aimed at contributing to the enhancement of LPA management performance in order to transfer this performance to the development of rural areas in the Republic of Moldova.

**The applicative value** of the research derives from the author's proposed sheet for assessing the impact of LPA management performance on rural development imperatives, as well as from the sustainable development factors identified based on the rural viability study. The paper assesses the impact of public administration management performance in order to identify the barriers to the transfer of performance on rural development, which allows the identification of a mechanism for its improvement by identifying certain concrete levers.

**Implementation of scientific results:** The results of scientific research have been disseminated both at national and international conferences and in articles published in specialist journals. Suggested recommendations and mechanisms to improve the performance of LPA management were used by three municipalities in rural areas of the Republic of Moldova.

**FETESCU CEZARA**

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