

LOCAL PERCEPTION ON/ UPON THE DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVES OF MOLDOVIȚA TERRITORIAL SYSTEM**Viorel CHIRIȚĂ***Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava, 720229, Romania
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daniela_matei2004@yahoo.com***Abstract**

The development strategies broadly mirror the vision of the public administrations upon the territorial evolution and hereupon convey their perception into local policies of valorification of the existing resources. Albeit the methodologies standing at the base of development strategies for the communes already encloses interviewing the citizens on matters concerning the development process, the present study aims to catch the very perception of the inhabitants belonging to Moldovița territorial system upon the local development by comparative interrogation of two target groups, namely, the 12grade students from Moldovița and Vatra Moldoviței communes and their parents. Processing the questionnaire revealed, depending on the plans targeted, both a unity of opinions regarding the tourism development and distinct differences on understanding the future role of the woods, migration or infrastructure. The difference in vision upon development in the case of the two groups interviewed shows, in our opinion, the degree of concrete grip held by the local development strategies on the economic exercise for which they are made. Thus, youngsters mostly wish for the development of tourism and access facilities, while their parents have a wider range of opinions largely anchored to the traditional economic development of the community.

Key words: *monastery; rural space; strategy; territorial perception; tourism.*

JEL Classification: *A13, O13, Z13, Z32*

I. INTRODUCTION

Moldovița and Vatra Moldoviței communes from Suceava county have behaved as a complex rural territorial system over time, while the core part has been played by both in turn (Chiriță ș.a 2006). As a matter of fact, the rural geographical space of Moldoviței basin is a functional bipolar territorial system, quite dynamic and highly unitary as well. The quality of this space viewed as a territorial system is the adjoint result of the inputs and outputs underlining the rural dynamics and territorial assembly defined by lands, built heritage, cultural values, economic products and rural landscapes.

Both inputs and outputs associated to the human and natural resources capitalized have interfered and merged in collection of intricate intercorrelations which are exemplary of a functional rural territorial system with landscape results such as *ridge or depression* and *valley between ridges*.

Thus, the territorial system of the upper valley of Moldoviței has always been engaged in a polarizing swing regulated by the above—mentioned components, namely, the territorial sub—systems corresponding to the two administrative territorial units under analysis: Moldovița and Vatra Moldoviței. As a territorial system, the structure resulted is characterized by, first, *stability* — quality given by its resources of natural and cultural heritage (Zotic, 2005). At the same time, it also holds the quality of dynamic territorial system — feature covered by the geodemographic character, by the population settled in the area down the historical and economic ages (Iosep, 1993) and by the geographical landscapes undergoing sequential alterations (Iacobescu, 1993, Istrate, 2008, Matei, 2012). The two fundamental dimensions — found in an organic symbiosis — are in a constant interference with the natural data of the territorial assembly. The visible and lasting consequences of these have been analyzed in the present paper via the effects they produced in the rural space associated with the two previously mentioned communities.

Thus, the succession of the major steps of territorial development in Vatra Moldoviței is essentially linked to the role played by it in the building of the human habitat (Vasilcu, 2008, Muntele, 1998), by resources (under the attention of the regional administrations), by means of communication and, last but not least, by the colonization or population emergencies (Iacobescu, 1993, Iosep, 1996, Lupchian, 2010). Deciphering the mechanisms by which Moldovița, the old village, has nowadays become a local polarizing center on the valley

carrying the same name, is a challenging endeavor in this structural and spacial bipolarity with Vatra Moldoviței locality.

The point of view expressed by the local communities upon the regional rural development is legally included in the local strategies of development. When it comes to two neighboring villages under the same natural conditions, namely, socioeconomic and historical data, the following question raises: what exactly has determined their bipolarity over time and, especially, how has it been mirrored upon their development?

Processing the results of the study (applied on the 12th grade students from the Technological Highschool of Moldovița and their parents) has aimed to sketch a vision as close to the reality as possible of the most appropriate local measures and policies which could support the development of this geographical area ruled by a series of developmental axes (tourism, wood working, communication convergence, cultural heritage). The study did not intend to overlap the local strategical goals of the two communities but to create a parallel between the perceptions expressed by the two categories of persons interviewed on different subjects via questionnaire.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Within the analysis of the perception upon the local space and the role played by different factors in its development, the inquiry run among the population from targeted high school students in the final years and their parents. Thus, it has been conducted both a comparative analysis of the perception upon local space as expressed by citizens of various ages and a comparison run in pair (child-parent) of some current items and demanding values in view of the settlement development from Moldovița upper basin and of relevance upon the role played currently and hereafter on medium term.

The instrument employed has been a 10-question enquiry (a questionnaire containing 7 closed questions and 3 open ones) applied to the 12th grade students from “Vasile Cocea” Technical High School of Moldovița in Suceava county and to their parents. Thought behind it was to check the hypothesis according to which the perceptions of youngsters and adults converge on economic evolution and community development. Thus, out of 73 distributed questionnaires, 68 were filled in by students and an equal number by parents, later processed in Microsoft Excel and went through the lead analysis.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS.

The questionnaire has aimed to establish whether the dwellers of the two previously mentioned communities are ware of the active link between the two villages in terms of economic polarization at valley level (tourism included) which brings benefits to the overall economic development. In this respect, the local history has recorded — in the territorial evolution of the two communes — a series of stages, even economic cycles that went one after another at a different pace for each of them and with direct and indirect effects upon the speeding mechanisms of some economic branches. These stages targeted either the natural resources for exploitation or local communities engaged in a certain activity, by colonizing some ethnic groups of interest in the developmental process in parallel with some policies agreed by the local administration (the colonization of the so called “zipseri”¹ from early 19th century in Vatra Moldoviței, the *Freudenthal* colony from Valea Stâinii village, the colonization of Slavic populations, such as Hutsuls, Ruthenes or Rusyns, Ukrainians directly or indirectly in Moldovița and forming the domain of habitat dispersion in Moldovița etc.) (Chiriță ș.a., 2014).

The first feature under discussion in the analysis run is the perception of the persons interviewed upon **the key factors which brought their contribution to the present socioeconomic development of the communities** where they live. Both students and adults have indicated as main reasons for a more pronounced development of Moldovița commune in comparison with Vatra Moldoviței the following: education, Moldovița’s larger population and a better developed commercial network of Moldovița (Fig. 1).

Even though the education is regarded by youth as a motive of community development, this is rather a theoretical perspective if we are to consider that most of them view education as means of an easy way out of their native village. Their parents also consider their children’s emigration as the unique opportunity for a better life. Also, the high percentage of adults who wish a good standard of living by a higher education level refers to their children’s possibility of getting better paid jobs abroad.

From a historical perspective upon valorization of the local potential, there have been periods of time which allowed an oscillation of the polarizing role between the two localities: a clearer role addressed to the exploitation development of iron resources from Iacobeni and shipped to Freudenthal for processing or of the timber factories associated with forest exploitation from Moldovița, the development of some nucleus of fairs well-built in Valea Moldoviței.

¹ Person coming from Slovakia, zips = Slovak

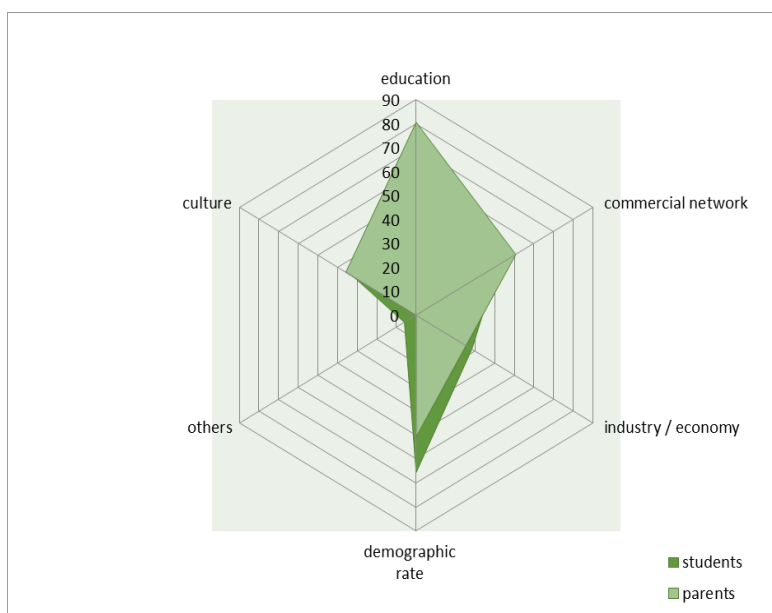


Figure 1 – The community`s perception of the key factors of present development (percent of total answers)

There is also the advantage given by the railroad, a plus to the road systems along or across the valley. In this regard, it cannot be overlooked the role played by the tourist circuit of the monasteries from the 80th in the perception upon the development of Vatra Moldoviței locality by comparison with Moldovița.

Out of the 10 questions asked through the questionnaire, more than half required a detailed analysis of the answers since the persons interviewed indicated a series of possible resources of development which were different in both groups.

Concerning the perception of the persons interviewed upon the role played by the forest, it is necessary to mention that out of the total 42.544 ha area accumulated by the 2 communes, 77% represents forest. Considering the proportion, it is only natural that this resource has been playing an important role over time in the economic life of both communities, such as: activities linked to the wood exploitation and working in Moldovița, the arrival of colonist groups whose main occupation was forest exploitation for building the domain of dispersed dwelling which resulted in establishing certain dwelling levels of high altitude or established a key role in the hierarchy of the 2 communes. Thus, the constant presence of this resource has influenced the following perception among the persons interviewed: both children and adults are aware of the tourist role played by the (40%), by its economic feature (40%), by its landscape value (54%) or its climate and environmental importance (66% of the students and merely 16% of the adults).

By correlating the answers given, it appears that forest has a future potential role for ecotourism and agritourism, while the economic effect is relatively diminished. Based on the data centralized by hall town, there are currently 12 sawmills in Moldovița, with more than 250 employees together, while there are 10 sawmills in Vatra Moldoviței with 150 employees. Although this is an important activity for a village in terms of number of persons employed, the perception of the inhabitants is influenced by the past forest economy of the timber factories that had at least 1000 employees.

Our investigations complemented by the results of the questionnaire reveal a reality of a certain adjustment type to the decrease of traditional resources in the area: if the above-indicated data about the economic valorification degree of the forest point out a more modest development of Vatra Moldoviței, the same locality makes up for it by tourism development if we take into account the 250 accommodation places in 10 guesthouses in comparison with the number of 10 guesthouses with 57 accommodation places from Moldovița. This is the possible explanation of the reason for which youngsters ascribe a lesser heritage role to the forest and credit it with more important environmental and climatic qualities by comparison with the adults who favor exclusively the economic part played by the forest.

Regarding the question of *What is the role of Moldovița monastery in the development of both localities?* 70% of the adults indicated the role played by the monastery in keeping the Orthodox Christianity, 35% of the adults pointed its hallmark role for Vatra Moldoviței and merely 30% acknowledged its economic role in the development of the localities from the valley. Both categories have indicated, in percentages of over 90%, the tourist role of the monastery in the development of the geographical space (Fig. 2). This question has registered a convergence of answers given by both children and their parents, even if the former ones acknowledged its economic role besides the tourist one in larger percentage than the adults.

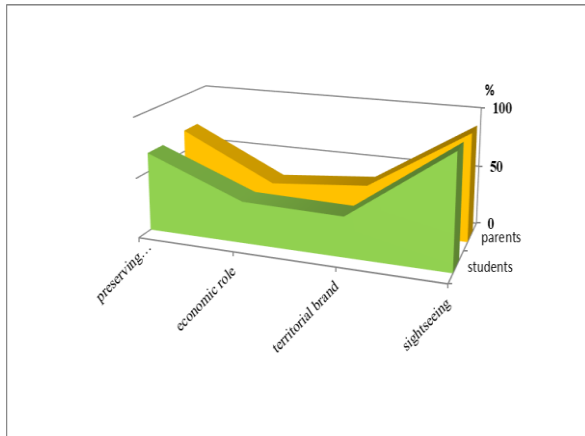


Figure 2 - Perception of the Moldovita Monastery's role in the Moldovita - Vatra Moldoviței territorial system development

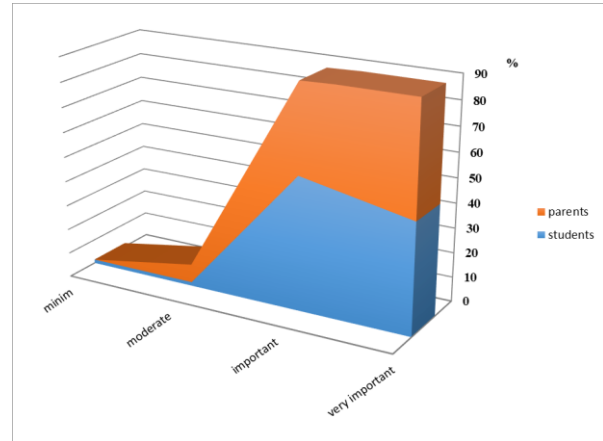


Figure 3 – The community's perception of cultural/religious tourism in the locality sustainable development

A key clue of the fact that the monastery stimulates the energies of the region also resides in the importance given to its role of religious tourism by all the persons interviewed as reply to the question of *What is the role of cultural (religious) tourism in the development of the locality you live in?* The attributes chosen were important and very important in percentages of 86% (parents) and 97% (children) (Fig. 3).

Moldovița monastery located in Vatra Moldoviței, a symbol for the territorial assembly under discussion, has played an important part over time and contributed to the development of the polarizing nature of the localities in the area, first from a religious point of view and secondly from a tourist perspective. Therefore, the road and accessibility to and from other UNESCO heritage objectives (Putna and Sucevița monasteries) straight to Vatra Moldoviței via 17A national road has changed in a way, from as early as the 70th. the orientation and trends of interest from Moldovița in comparison with the previous period. Although Moldovița's economic role is often expressed as a polarizing locality of the valley with the same name, mainly due to its territorial supremacy (forestry included) almost double by comparison with Vatra Moldoviței, the regional and national perception is that Vatra Moldoviței has a more important role. The inhabitants' perception, namely of the persons interviewed, is rather different: 87% of the parents and 91% of the youngsters consider Moldovița to be more developed.

Regarding the question of *Do you think that it would be useful the restoration to service of the railway between Vama and Moldovița?* Most respondents, both parents and children, see the matter in terms of tourist interest and transport of passengers rather than transport of goods (Fig. 4).

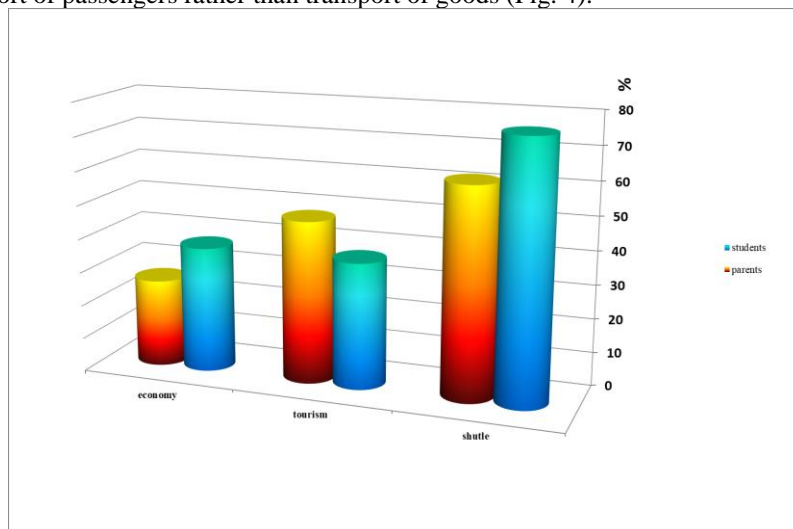


Figure 4 - Perception of the role of the railway Vama - Moldovița

It should be specified that the railway between the above-mentioned localities was partially destroyed by severe floods caused by Moldovița river in 2010. Beyond this general view on the operational role of the railway in the dynamics of the two communes, the youngsters' answers reveal a further importance given to the transport of goods by comparison with the adults (37% youngsters, 26% adults), while the tourist role is more appreciated

by the adults (48% adults, 37% youngsters). The utility of the railway for commuters is largely accepted by youngsters (76%) and also adults in fewer percentages (62%). This aspect shows the interest in accessibility that constitutes a key perceptual support for the development of the territorial assembly under analysis. Nevertheless, the relatively low percentage (roughly 40% adults and youngsters) of those who see as necessary the restoration to service of the railway shows an older reluctance of the inhabitants towards the railway route through the two communes and, also, a commuting habit by personal and other means of road transport which sort of brings down the myth of developing this mountain area via the railway. About the question **Which activity do you see as fully developed in your commune in 20 years?** Most adults did not come up with answers (merely 36%), while most youngsters (96%) did. The vision upon the future of the local economy under study reveals that youngsters do not see any future in forest exploitation (1%) or wood working (3%), but 54% of them credit the tourist development and agricultural advancement (10%) as well in future perspective. It is probably the most dichotomic answer within the entire interview as the adults' perception of the future gives more credit to the agriculture (30%) and then credits the tourism (31%) (fig.5).

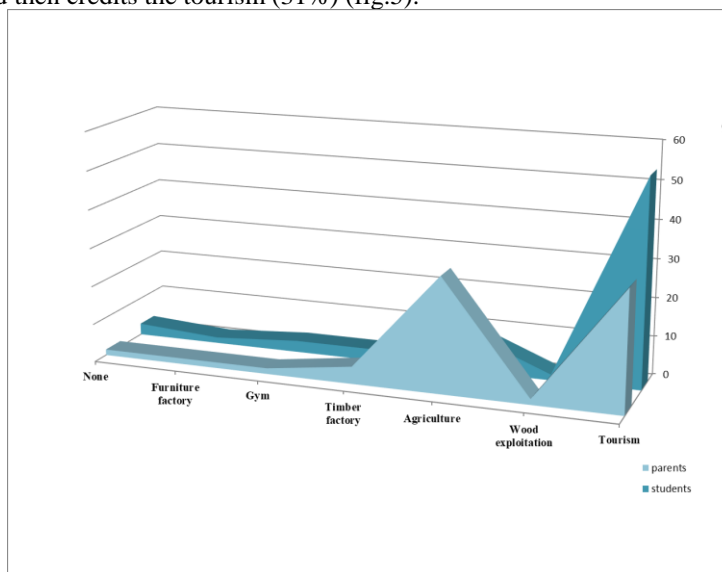


Figure 5 - The perception of the activities that will develop in the commune over 20 years

The answers given to this question correlated with the one present at the end of the questionnaire (section **Proposals, Points of View, Observations**), show an obvious orientation of both adults and children towards 3 levels of local development:

1. entrepreneurship activity (tourism, agriculture, factory of dairy products, household waste collection and disposal, shops of handcraft products);
2. holding deforestation and wood usage for producing high added value products (furniture factory, revitalization of old wooden handcraft shops, etc.);
3. infrastructure development, mainly creating or improving existing technical infrastructure (sewage system), cultural events (organizing events), social units (medical practice, gymnasium, parks, etc.) and commercial units as well.

Both categories of respondents agree with little difference (80% parents and 84% children) that a key role for the tourism development is played by tourist facilities. This perception is clearly expressed in the answers given to the question of **Which is the role of tourist facilities for the development of our locality? And** in the final section of the questionnaire (**Proposals, Points of View, observations**) (**Fig. 6**).

The confidence in future development by accessing community funds is rather modest. The same happens to the regional entrepreneurship. (under 6%).

An important question for us, due to its future economic and social implications, has been the one referring to the **youngsters' wish to return to their native locality after graduating**. Thus, we have tried to explore the plausible reasons for taking such a decision. A first conclusion is the fact that more than half of them wish to come back, while their parents are more skeptical about such a decision (merely 39%). The motives of coming back are primarily linked to the fact that both localities have a good and diversified entrepreneurial potential. Just a limited part of youngsters replied wittily that they would return to visit their family only.

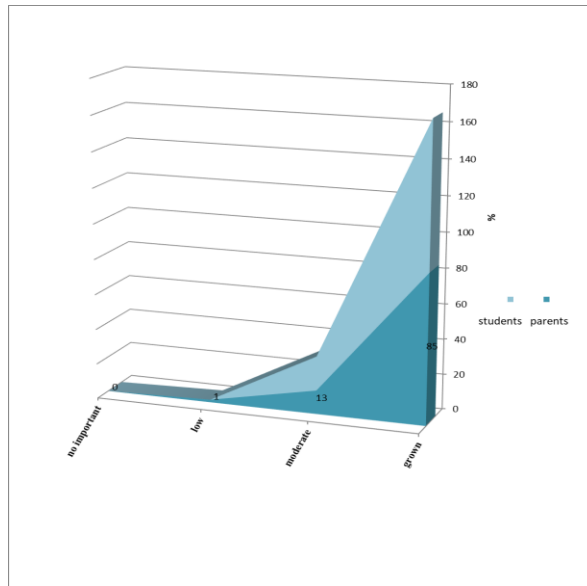


Figure 6 - Perception of the role tourist territorial planning

Beyond the answers recorded, we ask ourselves what is going to happen in terms of professional integration with the ones who will decide to come back and with those who will find other options of continuing their career. In the case of the first category, we have tried to identify their expectations about the economic, social and cultural life of the locality by asking the following question: *Which economic activities should be developed in your locality for engaging more young people?* The answers highlighted the important percentage of those who see the entrepreneurial potential of the tourist activities associated with public food units and engaging in certain sports activities (90% of the youngsters) (Fig. 7). The adults have more balanced options, such as agriculture processing activities of various products, further education for their children, besides tourism.

On the other hand, the adults' answers particularly reveal the need of stimulating the community social activities as shown by the proposals to build a gymnasium (40%), a cinema hall (14%) a football pitch (32%), restaurant/ pastry shop (47%) or public open pool (4%).

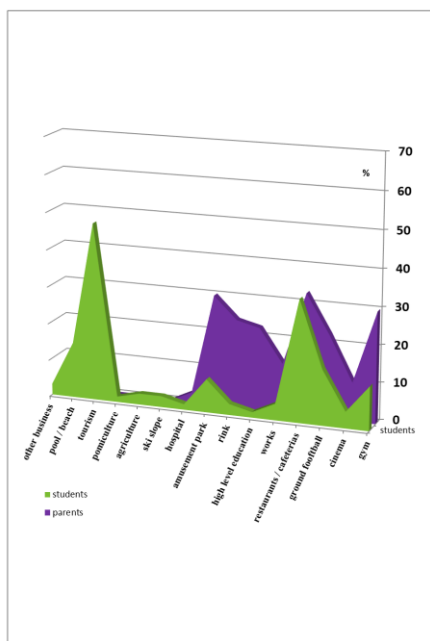


Figure 7 - What economic activities should be developed in the locality to be attractive to young people?

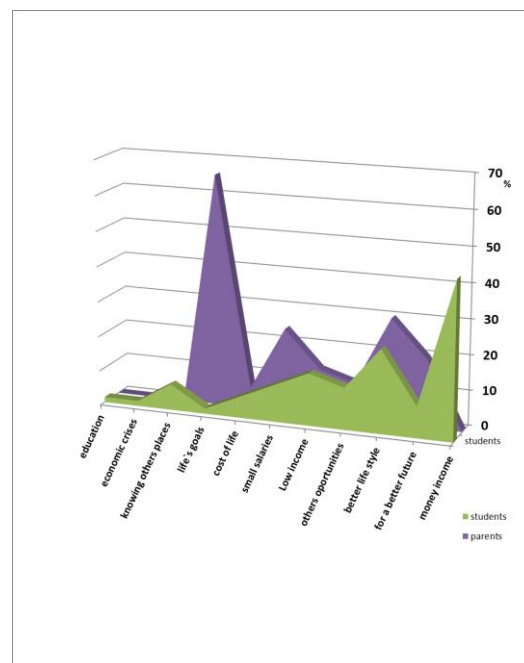


Figure 8 - Community's perception on the causes of the youngsters emigration

In the case of the other youth category, the ones who choose to leave their native village after graduation, prior analyzing the questionnaires, we analyzed the situation of departures and returns for 3 years (2015, 2016

and 2017). This was done with the support of the following indicators: 1) domicile change, out of the locality and 2) change of residence, out of the locality (including international migration) (See table 1).

Table 1. The dynamics of departures from locality

Indicator	2015		2016		2017	
	Moldovița	Vatra Moldoviței	Moldovița	Vatra Moldoviței	Moldovița	Vatra Moldoviței
Domicile change, out of the locality	54	59	57	40	53	44
Change of residence, out of the locality	41	48	39	25	29	32
Definitive migrant	-	5	-	3	1	1

Source: TEMPO-online, The National Institute of Statistics

There is a clear increase in numbers of domicile changes out of the locality in all the years analyzed, especially in Moldovița, with a slow-down tendency in comparison with 2012-2014. The indicator *Change of residence, out of the locality* also encloses external migration but it cannot make a clear difference between the percentage of those who left temporarily the country and those who migrated internally. However, it is certain that after 2010, when the numbers of those who used to live abroad reduced considerably, the re-development of the host countries reinstalled the previous flow of the crisis.

Coming back to the questionnaire applied, about the question of *Why do young people leave the locality and go abroad?* the answers received are quite various and distinctly motivated. In the case of young people, the most important motives are as it follows: money shortage (45%), a better and decent living standard (24%), opportunities (12%), financial deficit and low salaries, while, for most adults matter more reaching your personal goals (66%), better future perspectives (19%) and financial problems 22% (Fig. 8).

IV. CONCLUSION

The present study is a synthesis of our own research results and results obtained from applying the questionnaire and materialized in a series of statistical interpretations and economic reflections concerning the rural universe of a demarcated geographical area, namely, the two communes under investigation. The paper aims to have a unitary approach as a regional assembly. The analysis of the questionnaire has underlined a few conclusions which could prove useful for a possible common strategy of development addressed to both localities.

First, it is necessary to observe that the vision of these two groups interviewed (adults and adolescents) upon the development is different: most young people wish and hope for a tourism development and access facilities expansion, while their parents have more varied and rather traditional views about the economic development of the valley.

If, in our hypothesis, we have started from the certainty that accessibility plays a key role in the development of the communes located in Valea Moldoviței (in order to identify the premises of the territorial system development), the inhabitants of the two communes think that it is a quasi-natural datum of the development and it is regarded as a less evolved attribute over time, more relevant in supporting local activities than connected to the outer world. Even though, up to a point, the inhabitants' perception is natural and ordinary for the relatively remote areas, going out of the profoundly rural status is seen rather by means of current road systems and not by the present dysfunctional railway.

The main reason which appears to trigger the internal or external migration of young people is a safer economic development supported by the comforting thought of a later return home and possible investment in a local entrepreneurship. On the other hand, the adult population has designed a series of local territorial perceptions upon the development based on their own experience and wish to economically revitalize a past episode of the local history, while youngsters perceive the development less in terms of existing resources and more associated to a necessity to overcome the local economic and social phases of blockage.

The opinions of the young people interviewed has shown a further opening towards economic and social reality and, also, a formulated vision upon education which should be a thought-provoking homework for teachers and local decision-makers, but mainly for parents. This difference between the rigid value systems of the adults and the highly adjustable value system of the young people to a globalizing world could become the very source of development and advancement for the two analyzed communes.

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