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**Article**

## Vaslui county in the national context: Evolution and effects of mobility of the working age population

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## Vaslui county in the national context: evolution and effects of mobility of the working age population

Roxana Florina MUNTEANU\*

### Abstract

*The following paper shows the transition from internal to external migration and places Vaslui County into a spatial and time frame from the perspective of population mobility. Moreover, the consequences of the downgrading of internal migration by international migration are subject to the evolution of demographical and social indicators on which there are reflected: birth rate, general fertility, the rate of population growth, the index of demographical aging, because the involvement of the young population and young adult population in international migration led to a numerical decrease of the population with ages between 0-14, from 23,7% in 1990 to 15,0% in 2012, the increase of the majority of the old age population, of 65 years old and more, from 10,3% in 1990 to 15,0% in 2012 and of adult the population, 15-64 years old, from 66% in 1990 to 70% in 2012, according to National Institute of Statistics.*

**Keywords:** labour force, emigration, birth rate, Vaslui County

**JEL Classification:** E24, J21, J6, O15

### Introduction

By analysing these changes from the spatial point of view, one can notice a rapid increase in the volume of emigrants between the census of 2002 and that of the 2011. Moreover, the final or circulatory character of the Romanian emigration shows severe consequences on the demographic processes and loses of the labour force from all economical layers, both nationally, regionally but especially locally. The analysis on county level records, in this case, the various spreading of emigration in the territory thus noticing a concentration of temporary and long-term emigration to the north side (Maramureş, Sălaj and Bistriţa-Năsăud Counties) and to the north-east of the country (Iaşi, Suceava, Botoşani, Bacău, Neamţ and Vaslui Counties) in comparison to the counties from the west and north-west of the country which are known to provide temporary emigration.

At national level, the analysis reveals Vaslui County as a region of a fairly strong and locally active internal migration, and recently the population focused towards external migration. According to the analysis of distribution of this phenomenon at territorial level, the role of urban centres in

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proving this mobility, where, according to a Population Count in 2002, the presence of migration was mostly noticed in three main local urban towns of Bârlad, Vaslui and Huși. The official statistics data shows these three urban centres as main providers in international migration of the population from Vaslui County but also the most important places of diffusion of migration towards the rural areas.

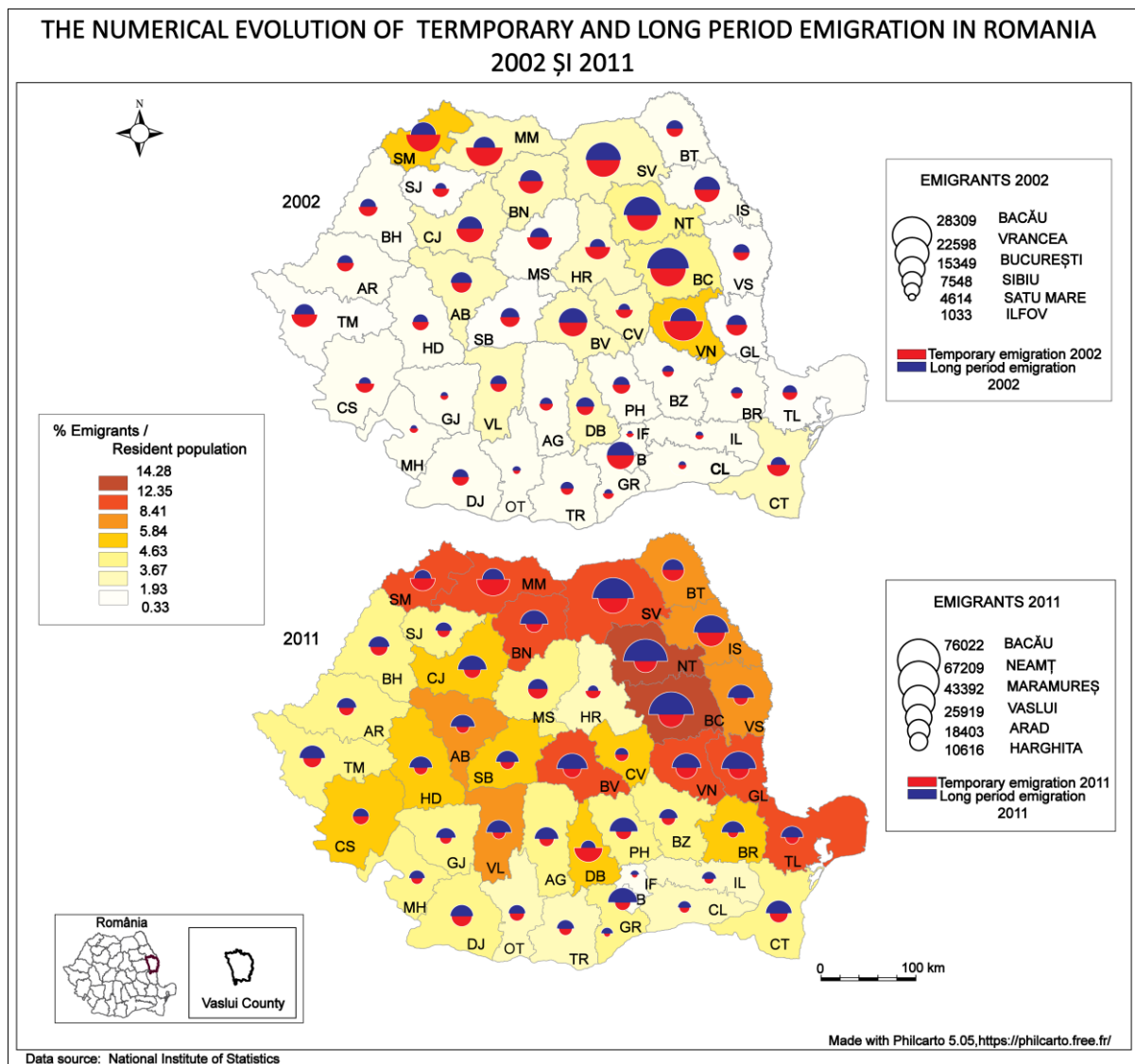
In Vaslui County, internal migration was characterized by two features, first by the rural exodus affecting the home villages but also at regional or national level (until 1997 most of the countryside were commuters, about 30%, reaching at present, more than 10% in 2009) and then as a result of the industrial destabilization since 1997 the urban exodus (ADR Nord -Est, 2007-2013, p. 57).

According to its socio-economic status, this region was characterized by multiple transformations in industry and agriculture, lately experiencing an increase in external migration despite differential accessibility to infrastructure, information or services. Also, one can notice that the extension of the external mobility of the Vaslui population followed a progressive route and it went from 0.84% emigrants of the resident population in 2002 (3601 migrants registered in 2002) to 7.02% of emigrants in 2011 (25919 migrants registered in 2011) of which 77.9% are emigrants for a long period of time and only 22% are temporary migrants (Figure 1).

The article captures the domino effect of these migratory movements showing the conditionality between the evolutionary trajectories of internal and external migration and the outcome that has resulted in substantial changes in the demographic structure of population. The migration of the population causes a series of consequences that are visible in the distribution of the total number of the population because demographic indicators tend to decrease.

An important aspect of how the influence of migration on population distribution is also linked with the flows of both genders that are involved. The long-term emigration affects the fertility rate and birth rate in this region because those who are involved represent people at a young age having between 20- 35 years old, which is the most important segment of the labour force and the most reproductive group of this county. These changes are visible with the decline in the birth rate in Vaslui, from 13 ‰ in 2002 to 9.3 ‰ in 2011 and even 8.2 ‰ in 2015, therefore the first demographic imbalance appears resulting in the decrease the school population, young labour losses accelerating demographic aging (ADR Nord -Est, 2007-2013, p. 57).

**Figure 1. The numerical evolution of temporary and long period emigration in Romania**



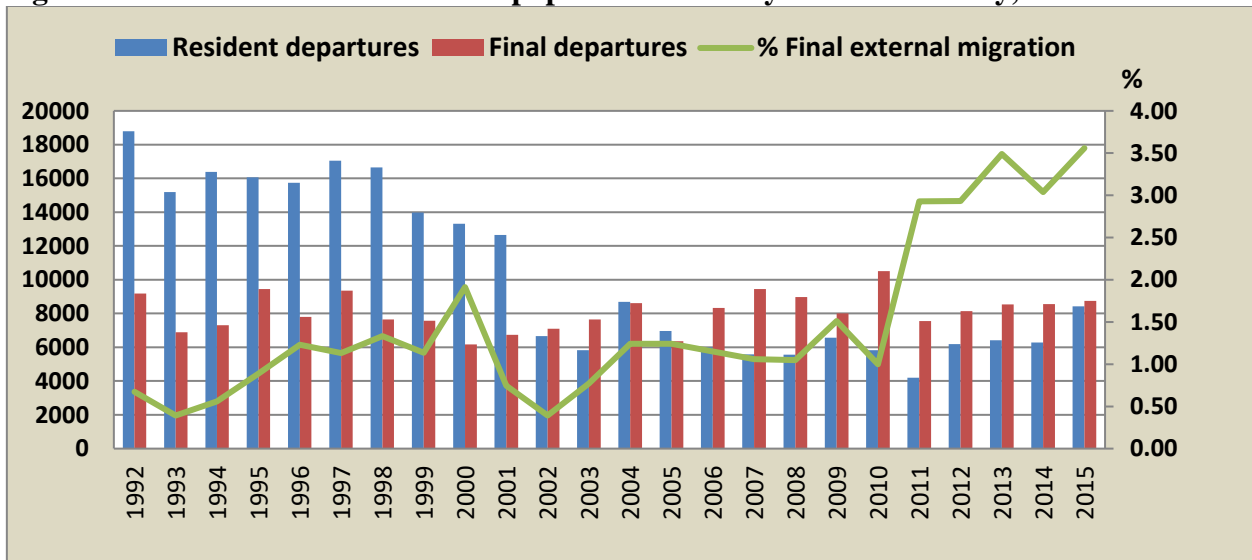
Source: Own representation

### 1. The evolution of international migration in Vaslui County between the two censuses of 2002 and 2011

Vaslui County is considered to be a place of a fairly strong and locally active internal migration, and during this last period, directed towards a resetting of the population towards external migration, demonstrating also that the circumstances of everyday life forces the individual to get out of the "sandbox" and cross borders for a better life. In the census of October 2011, the extent of emigration in Vaslui was clearly revealed by the fact that only 15694 inhabitants were confirmed, of which 20195

were away for a long period (almost 5% mostly young), with an additional of 5724 temporary emigrants.

**Figure 2. The numerical evolution of population mobility in Vaslui county, 1992 - 2015**



Data source: National Institute of Statistics

In this context we compare the evolution of the numbers regarding the population migration between 1992 and 2015 which shows the dominance of resident departures in the last decade of the 90s until 2001 (16th nationally both in 2002 and in 2011) and after that it began to decrease systematically (with a maximum of over 18000 people in the year 1992 and a minimum of 4204 people registered in 2011). The highest number of emigrants was recorded in 2010 when over 10406 people moved, and the minimum in the early 2000s when 6046 people left (Figure 2).

This behaviour concerning external migration was launched after 2002, and this was the moment when emigration exceeded internal migration. If we were to compare, in 2002, 1853 of short term emigrants were registered and 1748 emigrants over a long period, and after 10 years their number tripled on short term emigration reaching to 5724 emigrants and in the case of those who left for an extended period the increase was tenfold reaching to 20195 emigrants.

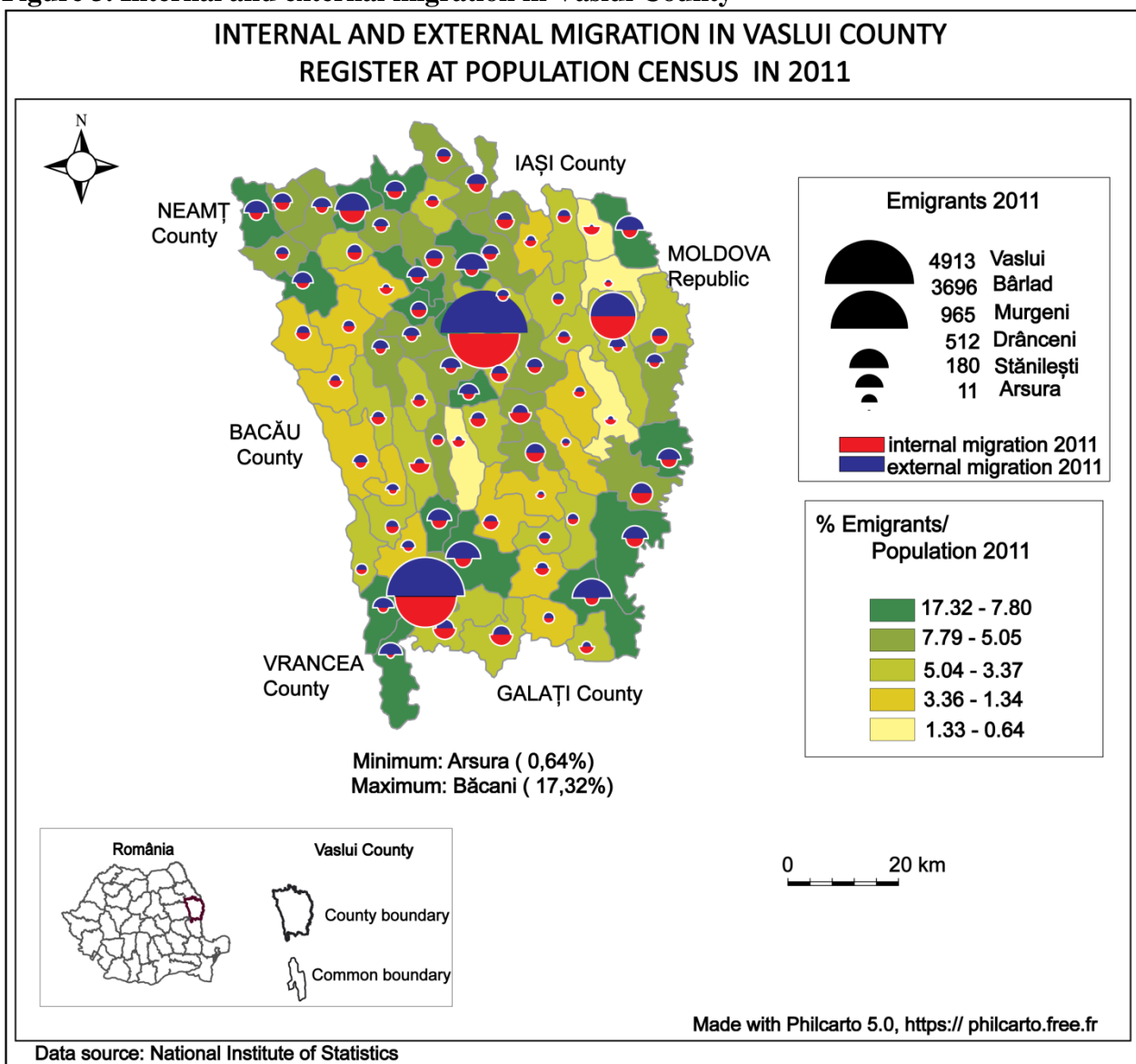
This increase in external migration continued in the following years when, according to the National Institute of Statistics for the year 2014, 33505 emigrants were recorded, ranking Vaslui among the top 15 counties with an important scale in emigration among the working age population (12<sup>th</sup> place nationally).

When analysing the distribution at the local level one can see the role played by the urban centres in the event of such mobility, which in early 2002 was dominated by internal temporary

migration and for a long time, but we may notice the presence of emigration, especially in urban areas such as Bârlad, Vaslui (where there is the largest number of migrants), Huși, Negrești or rural areas in their neighbourhood (Figure 3).

The propensity towards internal migration is proved by the 8537 migrants registered for a long-term migration and the 5598 migrants for short term. If we analyse the numerical distribution of migrants from the rural areas, we see that temporary migration is more active in the north and western part of the county than the centre and east of the county since, compared with long term migration occupying several locations in northern and south-eastern county municipalities represented by Fălciu Berezeni and Vetrișoia.

**Figure 3. Internal and external migration in Vaslui County**



Source: Own representation

The situation changed in 2011, and the presence of both types of mobility is becoming more relevant. Then urban areas are the largest providers of migrants, but there is a higher insertion of the rural population in these two forms of mobility in the last decades.

The spatial distribution of migrants highlights the different aspects of the relationship between short term migrants and emigrants and which of the urban centres have lost a significant part of the population of working age.

What should be emphasized in this case takes into account the fairly small distance from the urban centre polarisation represented by Bârlad, Vaslui, Huși and Negrești that have an important role in facilitating access to certain information and services. By comparing the two forms of mobility, we see that both internal migration and international migration, either temporarily or for a long time are present in all administrative units in Vaslui, the exception being in the rural areas in the centre of the county and isolated in the localities of south where internal migration is still the main form of mobility chosen by population.

Considering migration over a long period of time we can trace a surprising reversal of the two forms of mobility, exposed by the fact that long term emigration exceeds internal migration registering 20 195 emigrants to 8401 according to 2011 census. The main suppliers for long term emigration are Vaslui that registered 4470 emigrants which represents a rate of over 23% of all migrants in Vaslui County and Bârlad with 3245 migrants respectively 17% of total long-term emigrants, followed by Huși, Murgeni and Negrești.

Out of the 81 municipalities located in rural areas, 16 municipalities registered a long term internal migration over an emigration for a long period and the remaining 65 municipalities are involved in this new trend of migration, of which only 35 of them stands with over 100 emigrants such as Zorleni (highest number of municipalities that county 601 immigrants) Drănceni (455 migrants) Văleni (412 migrants), Fălciu (386 migrants), Vetrișoia (335 migrants), Tutova (283 migrants), Berezeni (257 migrants), Ivești (250 migrants), Pungești (240 migrants), Lipov, Rebricea, Ștefan cel Mare, Codăiești (199 migrants), Băcești, Bălteni, Oșești, Munteni, Deleni, Roșiești, etc.

We can identify at the local level certain "hot spots" placed first of all around the residence of the county, which have extended their influence in nearby rural areas, the second area stands in the northwest county, the third represented by the municipalities Fălciu Berezeni and Vetrișoia alongside Murgeni city, and the fourth in the south, where there is the city of Bârlad. The spatial distribution of these "outbreaks" is explained by the influence of urban centres, the first and main transmitters of migration, but also by the location when it is close to the main roads of regional



significance or in the proximity of another county, especially in the north where we find Iași county or in west, Bacău county.

Regarding the population contact with the international labour market it took place much later than other counties in the country, but what is surprising is the speed with which Vaslui went from 0.84% of the resident population of emigrants in 2002 (3601 migrants registered in 2002) to 7.02% of emigrants from stable population in 2011 (25919 migrants registered in 2011) of which 77.9% are emigrants for a long period and only 22% of short period emigrants (Figure 4).

Given the dynamics of international migration in this space we must remember that in countries like Italy and Spain after 2002, permutations regarding residence permits for illegal immigrants occurred, which made this an accessible phenomenon for a lot of people (Dimitriu et. al., 2013, p.110.). We see in 2002 a concentration of emigrants in urban areas and less in the rural areas, unlike the figures recorded in the 2011 census that show an intensification and expansion of this phenomena in all the municipalities in the Vaslui county.

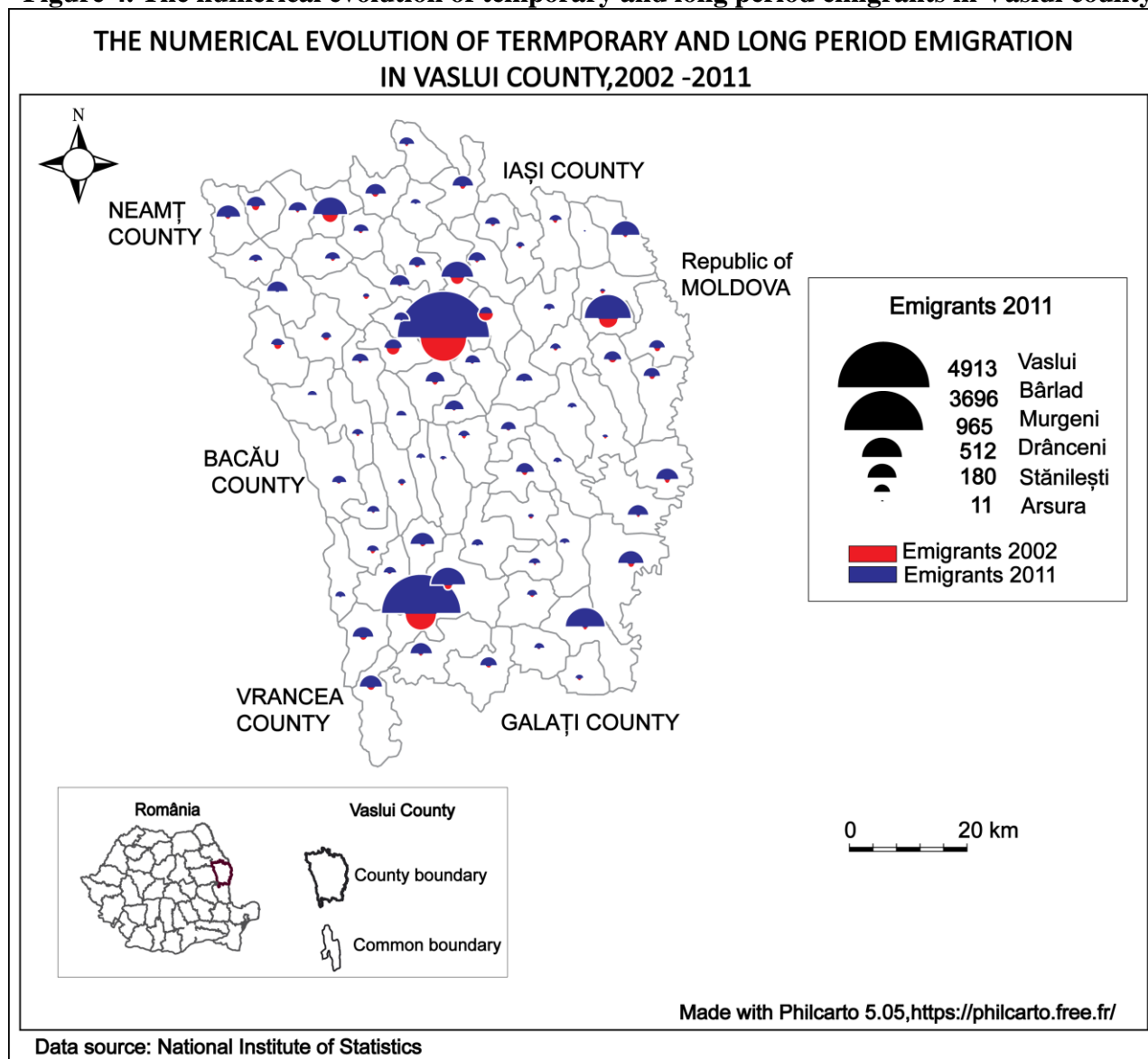
We can see that in the 5 urban settlements, only two municipalities have over 50% of emigrants and the highest number of emigrants is registered in Vaslui (4913 emigrants) followed by Bârlad (3696 emigrants) and Huși (1320 emigrants) but also cities like Murgeni captures a growing number, the city Negrești (965 emigrants to 750 emigrants) and among rural areas, Zorleni with 723 emigrants ranks first, followed by Văleni with 631 emigrants and Drănceni with 512 emigrants.

Also, then numerical distribution in the territory clearly highlights the differences between the administrative areas of the county and the Vaslui central area between the north and south of Bârlad which is characterized by the lowest number of emigrants. This can be explained both by the direction taken by the majority of the population to an internal migration, but also by the young population deficit due to lower birth rates.

If we were to compare the share of short-term emigrants and long-term emigrants in 2011, we distinguish more homogeneous groups in the spatial distribution of migration on a temporary period. Although from numerical point of view emigration over a long period is 4 times higher than the short term one, temporary migration has a high occurrence in the northern and western half of the county. In this case the maximum is owned by the city of Bârlad, followed by Vaslui, Huși, Negrești and then Murgeni last place, and in the rural area Băcani with 6.08% is in first place.



**Figure 4. The numerical evolution of temporary and long period emigrants in Vaslui county**



Source: Own representation

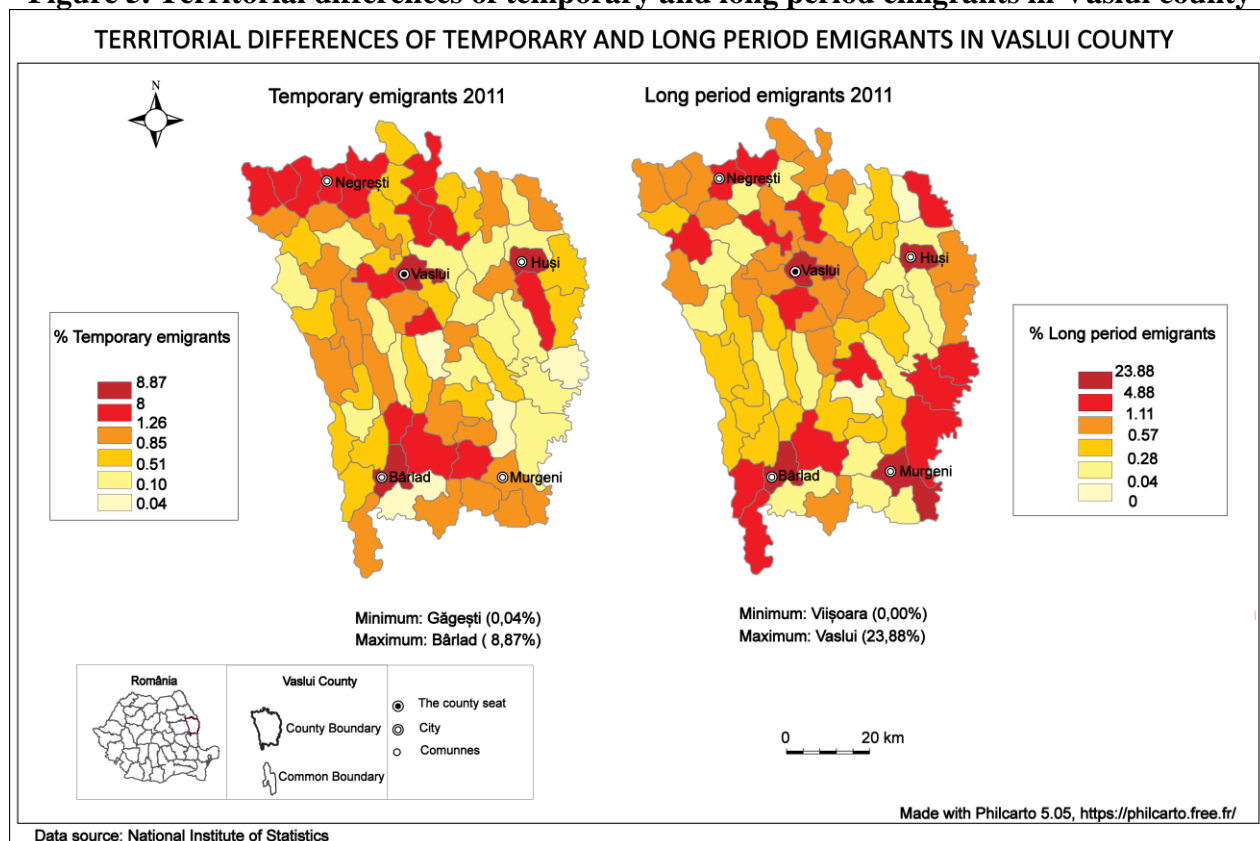
I must highlight the differences in distribution between these two forms of mobility present in the rural areas where there were 8 villages with under 10 migrants temporarily (Vetrișoia and Găgești only 2 migrants Temporary each Costești 3 migrants Pogana 9 migrants Tanacu 5 migrants Tătărani 8 migrants Arsura 7 emigrants and Bogdana 8 emigrants), while 3 villages with below 10 migrants (Arsura, Cantemir and Epurenii) and one village does not have any migrants a long period (Vișoara) (Figure 3). Unlike temporary emigration, long term emigration is a phenomenon concentrated mainly around the residence of the district, which extends its range of influence from the north to the south in the northwest where the representative is the city Negrești around Bârlad and the river Prut area.

Recent developments in such forms of emigration were truly spectacular in the last period between the censuses, especially among emigrants over an extended period of time. If in 2002 both

temporary emigration and emigration for a long period had a similar number of emigrants, respectively, temporary 1853 emigrants and 1748 emigrants over a long period the census in October 2011 showed a significant increase in the number of emigrants about 25919 emigrants. This occurred against a background of increasing economic deficit, helped by changes in the international labour market and spread by ties of kinship, friendship, religious organizations, recruitment organizations or study programs.

Distinguishing between temporary migration, which takes into account those who have emigrated for more than a year, we cannot think that this form of mobility can be converted into a long period exceeding the threshold of one year, which certainly was the case in light of the changes in the number of inhabitants. Although the purpose of these temporary departure was not directed only to search for a job according to the information obtained from the census in October 2011, where nationally over 7000 individuals were studying, 27000 were looking for a job, 58000 left for family reasons, 12000 to 31000 were tourists, we may notice some inconsistency and insincerity of those interviewed proving a weight in determining the precise reason and period of stay abroad.

**Figure 5. Territorial differences of temporary and long period emigrants in Vaslui county**



Source: Own representation

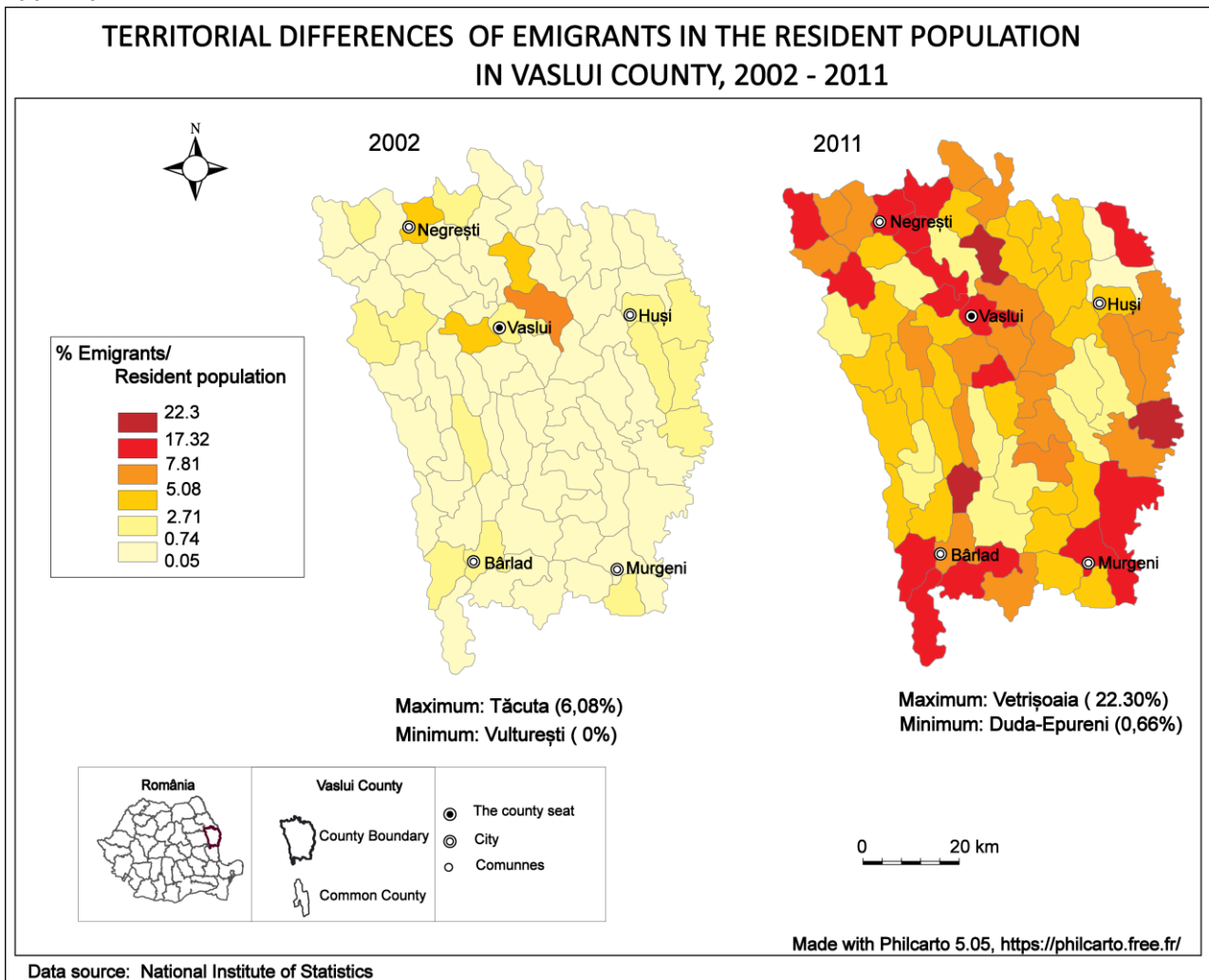
Analysing temporary emigration we notice that the highest number of emigrants is located in urban centres in 2002 with a maximum in the county capital, but the situation changed in 2011 with increases in both the urban centers where the maximum is reached by the city of Bârlad, especially in rural areas where there are nine villages with more than 100 migrants (Zorleni, Băcești, Todirești, Vulturești, Solesti, Deleni, Văleni, Băcani, Pădureni) first Băcani with 309 emigrants (only 8 migrants registered in 2002), the second place with 219 emigrants Văleni (81 emigrants registered in 2002) and the third place with 189 emigrants Pădureni (11 emigrants registered in 2002) (Figure 5).

The relationship between temporary emigration and the resident population was surprising in 2002 due to minor losses of less than 1% of the resident population in most county municipalities except Tanacu (2.53% in 2335 inhabitants), Văleni (2.31% in 3507 inhabitants) and Laza (1.78% in 4390 inhabitants) where although the number of migrants did not exceed the population, losses were felt due to differences between the number of inhabitants.

In 2011 the loss of population became increasingly significant with only 30 municipalities having less than 1% of the population as emigrants, 34 communes 1% of the population are emigrants, 10 communes with 2% of the population, 2 communes 3% of the population, a common with 4% of the population 3 to 5% of common and 1 common with 6% of population. The maximum is recorded in Băcani with a percentage of 14.67% of the population being temporarily abroad (compared to 2002 where he had a share below 1% of immigrant population). What stands out at the local level is that all these communes which was recorded a rate of over 3% of the population being emigrants are connected by access roads (in the northwest Băcești, Todirești and Dumești, south Suletea, Epureni, Blăgești and Mălușteni or west town Băcani, Alexandru Vlahuță, Poienești, Laza).

The evolution of emigration for a long period followed the same route with the temporary emigration in terms of growth, only that the latter experienced a higher intensity, at a rate of 0.40% of the resident population registered as emigrants in 2002 to a 5.47% population are emigrants over a long period in 2011. Within a decade we notice that only in Vaslui, the numbers have grown from 722 emigrants to more than 4 000 immigrants, followed by the city of Bârlad which recorded a total of 271 emigrants, and in October 2011 there were 3245 emigrants (Figure 6). If in 2002 the majority of rural areas were under 100 emigrants and even 8 villages with no emigrants (Blăgești, Bogdana, Bogdănița, Găgești, Hoceni, Pogana, Voinești and Zapodeni) in 2011 in 34 communes were registered between 100 and 600 emigrants over a long period. Although the two urban centres, Vaslui and Bârlad, combine more than 40% of the total emigrants over a long period in the county and the municipalities in rural area have soared in the number of emigrants such as: Băcani, Drănceni, Ivești, Munteni, Fălciu, Pungești, Zorleni, Văleni and Vetrișoia.

**Figure 6. Territorial differences of emigrants in the resident population in Vaslui county, 2002-2011**



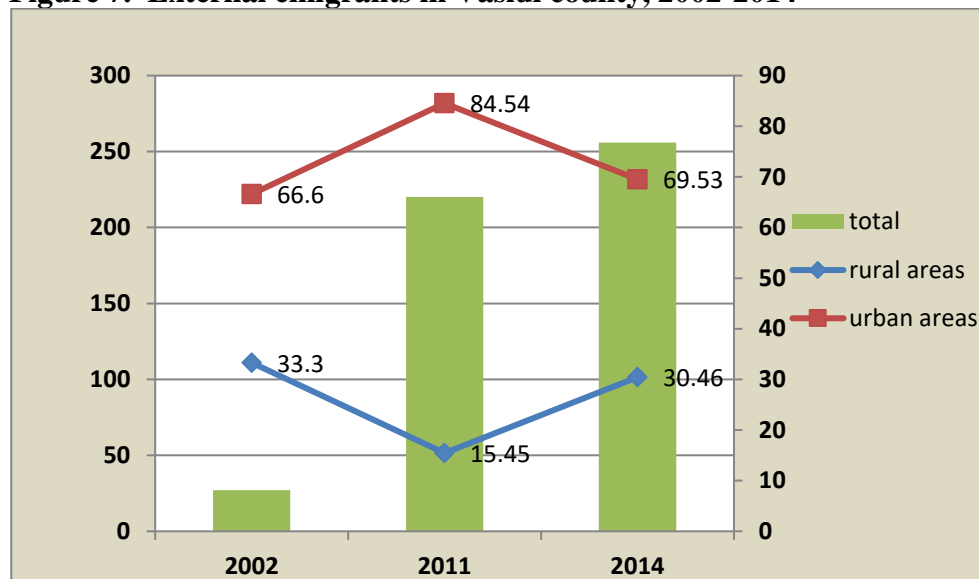
Source: Own representation

However, differences between these two forms of mobility are visible more in the urban centres and this brings up the question of how many of them come back or transform this type of mobility as a permanent emigration.

So, if you look at the period between 1991 and 2015 we can see that emigration definitely registers a sinuous evolution, with increases and decreases, maintaining itself a long time under 4%. Beginning with 2011 the number of emigrants began to grow steadily every year so far reaching a rate of 8% (2015). Although the proportion of permanent emigration is much lower in this county compared to other counties (ranked 23 in 2015), calculated from 1991 until 2015, about 3904 people chose to emigrate permanently according to statistics. Across the two areas we notice clear differences, in urban areas this emigration form prevails with 3546 migrants while rural areas have lost only 358 people in the period 1991-2015.

The statistical data obtained from the National Statistics Institute show an increase of this form of emigration in urban and rural areas in 2011 with 150 people. The maximum number of permanent emigrants was recorded in 2013 when 482 people chose to settle abroad, and the minimum number was set in 1993 with 27 people (Figure 7). After this maximum was recorded, a small decline was registered in 2014 reaching a total of 409 immigrants, while in rural areas the number of permanent emigrants reached 100 people compared to 50 recorded in 2011, but the number in the urban areas declined rebounding next year when there were 481 permanent emigrants.

**Figure 7. External emigrants in Vaslui county, 2002-2014**



Source: Romanian National Institute of Statistics

## 2. Demographic imbalances in the Vaslui population

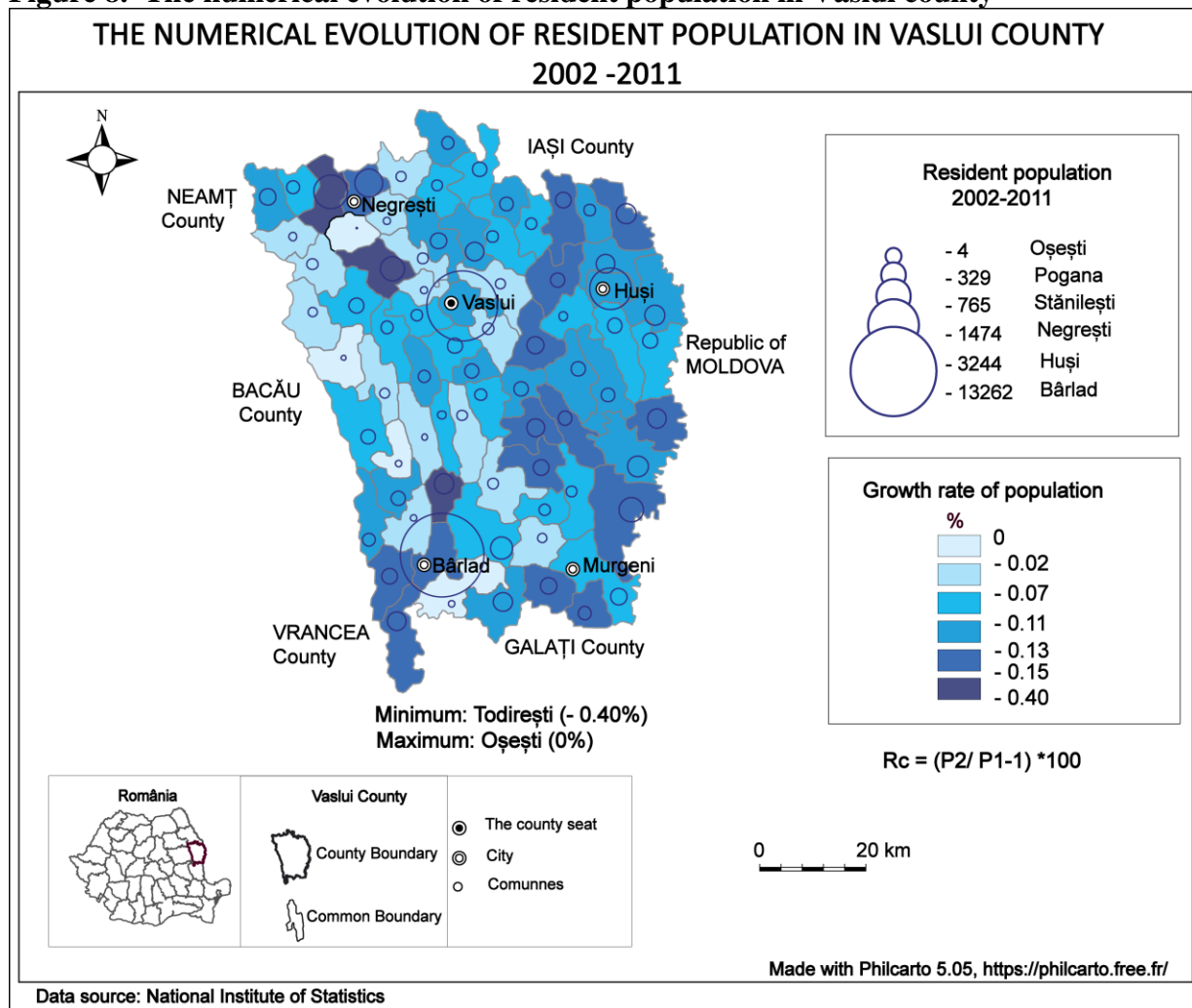
The quantitative evolution of the population in Vaslui shows that the number of inhabitants decreased in all areas, especially in the last period between censuses, 2002-2011, when the resident population losses were similar to the size of a city about 59550 people (Department of Statistics Vaslui County, 2015).

Comparing these trends to the censuses between 1992 and 2002, we see that the population of the county was subjected to a loss of more than 6325 people, which brings us to the conclusion presented before mentioning the strong and lasting impact of external migration on population. Given the fact that emigrants for a short period of time were included in the residential population it becomes even more difficult to believe that they were in the country at that time or that they will return home. Although the biggest losses are recorded as regards the long-term emigration, Vaslui county has an active and constant internal migration which has been slowly depopulating the territory. In fact, these map representations highlight the cumulative consequences of the demographic indicators and the

extension of the migratory behaviour in this space, which exceeded the individual scale and was transformed into a mass movement leaving behind losses in each community.

Regarding the rate of the population growth between 2002 and 2011, which is still negative in Vaslui county, we see that the greatest losses were recorded in the urban areas, the city of Bârlad taking first place with 13262 people, followed by Vaslui county with 9414 people and Huși with 3244 people, but in rural areas the losses were significant too, as we see in Todirești exceeding the total loss of the two cities in the county, Negrești (1474 people) and Murgeni (-555 persons) with 2 178 people, followed by Fălciu with 1119 people and Delesti with 1084 people. A loss below 100 inhabitants was recorded only in 6 communes of the county that were Vulturești, Voinești, Oșești (-4 people), Bălteni, Alexandru Vlahuță and Iana (Figure 8).

**Figure 8. The numerical evolution of resident population in Vaslui county**



Source: Own representation

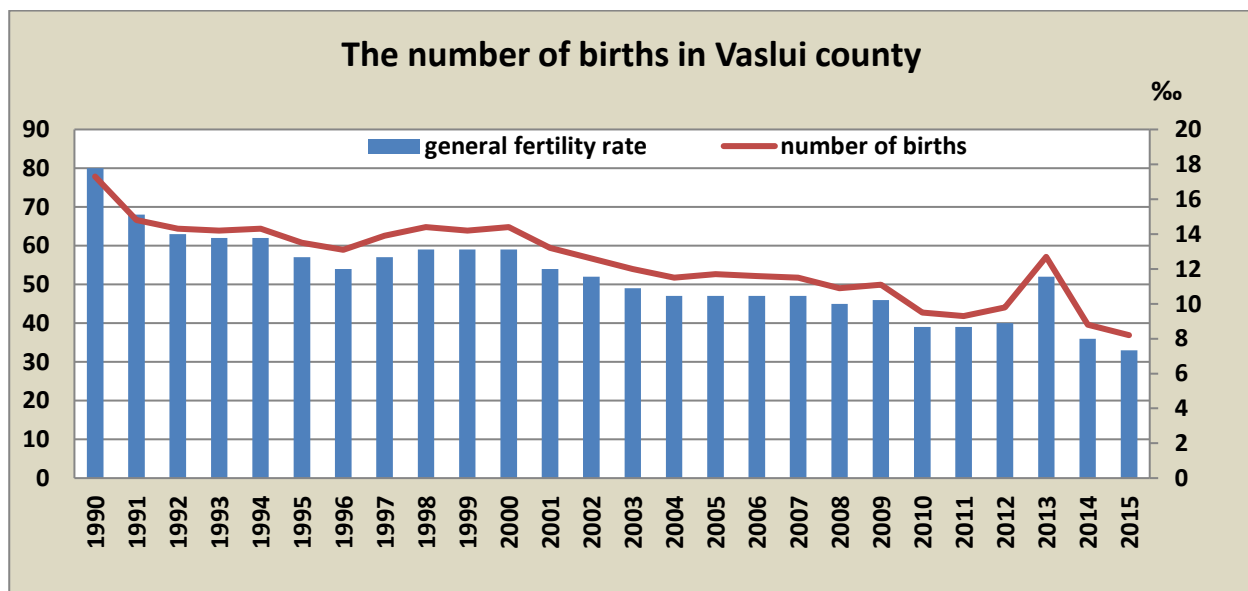


Following the distribution of the population growth rate we can notice that most establishments in the east of the county have rates between -0.11% and -0.15%, comparative with those in the west that are showing rates between 0 and 0.07% explained by their minor losses for emigration. In relation to these rates one can notice that the number of residents dropped in most places in the eastern and central county of Vaslui with an average population between 2000 and 3000 people, and this is related both to the changes in the birth rates and the migration population in these areas.

If we correlate this result with the natural growth rate, which refers to the difference between births and deaths per 1000 inhabitants, it is clear that the eastern part of the county is more affected than the west of the county. Urban centres with negative rates in 2002 are Bârlad and Huși. In the countryside only a few villages in the northwest and centre have a positive rate, the highest being recorded in the village Dragomirești (133 births to 45 deaths).

The main demographic problem caused by this movement is the declining birth rate and thus the impairing fertility rate of population replacement for generations. From 1990 to 2015 these two demographic indicators showed a downward trend influenced by socio-economic changes experienced by the population of this area. Although it was one of the counties with the highest rates of births nationwide, at present Vaslui has a birth rate of 8.2 ‰ (2015) being 28 nationally ranked alongside Bacău and Vrancea counties (figure 9).

**Figure 9. The number of births in Vaslui County**



Source: Romanian National Institute of Statistics

The immediate effect of these two changes in the evolution of the demographic indicators which are significant for the age structure of the population in Vaslui county was that shifted to older ages.



This confirms that most of the towns with declines in birth rates have higher figures of the emigrated population.

## Conclusions

The local analysis offers a clear vision of the trends of the migration phenomenon and of the emigrant's profile in the two environments of resistance thus being able to explore the spatial, social and economic implications. Moreover, comparing the emigrational structures of the two resistance environments it is shown that the population which is most predisposed to this form of mobility has social particularities and reasons such as emigrational chains, social status, level of education, age which allows us to a better understanding of individual migratory behaviours which take place on the level of the two environments of resistance.

Emigration has had a devastating impact for a long period in Vaslui as it affected places like Berezeni, Fălciu, Vetrișoia, Bârlad and periphery-urban area to its north county and bordering areas which determined a decrease in the birth rates below 10 ‰ more pronounced than in other areas of the county. As expected in the central and western county where temporary emigration is active, the birth rate decreased to 11 ‰ rate birth (in 2002 here encountering the highest values of birth).

In the new context, the involvement of young male and female in this area brings slippages in the total fertility rate and at national level it has already dropped below, the replacement of population reaching more than 1.3 children per woman (CNPV, 2006, p. 8).

In other words, the changes that occurred as a result of emigration, affected the population structure by gender and age groups in Vaslui county. We cannot establish for sure the extent to which the emigration of the population of the two environments of resistance has irretrievable effects on social-demographical structure of a territory what can be noticed, according to the two population counts and to the sociological inquiry, is that they are directly connected to the period of the emigrants living in the destination country because, the longer they remain abroad, the more difficult the return will be in terms of reintegration as financial aspects have an important role in terms of the average duration of migration.

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