

# YOUTHIFICATION IN THE METROPOLITAN AREA OF CLUJ

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**Abstract.** This research exercise aims to identify all areas affected by what is now known as 'youthification' in the Metropolitan Area of Cluj. Broadly speaking, an area touched by youthification witnesses a massive arrival of young adults, who invest in housing, but only remain there until they age. Youthification is usually the second phase within an encompassing process of gentrification. To gain a clearer picture of this phenomenon, we employed a snapshot of the situation recorded by the Population and Housing Census of 2011. Using this image as a starting point, we then applied statistical thresholds aimed at measuring the presence and intensity of youthification within different areas. Thereafter, we looked at areas exhibiting the same level of youthification, in order to find those common traits of their young adult inhabitants that might prove relevant for their choices in matters of housing. Once completed, our efforts resulted in the first map showing the areas affected by youthification within the Metropolitan Area of Cluj. In addition, we reached the following conclusion: Young adults who live in the city are more likely to still be enrolled in a form of education and less likely to be married or to have children than those who live in the suburbs or in rural areas. This observation implies that there might be some hidden dependency relations, which are at work in shaping the choice of housing.

**Key words:** youthification, young adults, housing, demography.

## 1. Introduction

Population can be used as one of the main indicators for studying urban evolution (Mykhnenko and Turok, 2007; McGranathan and Wojan, 2007; Pratschke and Haase, 2007). Hence, age structure and social structure can reveal valuable information about specific needs in matters of housing (Cocheci, 2013).

Without implying that a person belonging to a certain age group has a clear-cut

profile, it is reasonable to assume that such a person might present some common characteristics with other group members (Cocheci, 2013). Most of these features can be directly or indirectly related to age. Thus, while age usually determines the ability to labour, it might also influence the position of a member within a household, mostly in its dependency relations.

It is somewhat less obvious however, that age can provide some information about

the type of household a person belongs to. Hence, members of certain age groups might, for example, have a greater probability to live in single-person households. To some extent, social and cultural habits and behaviour might also be shared by members of a generation, which can consist of one or more age groups (Rodriguez-Pose and Storper, 2006). Such traits, shared by people of similar age, can translate into common needs and habits in matters of housing.

*Youthification* (Moos, 2016) is a relatively new concept used to describe the spatial concentration of young adults: “Whereas gentrification is described as a class-based process, resulting in displacement of lower income earners, youthification sees the in-movement of young adults across the income spectrum, both in owners and renters, and sees their departure as those young adults age” (Moos et al., 2015). The term refers solely to age structure, but because of common needs shared by the same age group, it also bears social and economic implications. Therefore, a pre-existing housing structure and some of the urban amenities related to it might be a cause for such demographic concentrations: “Youthification and gentrification are not mutually exclusive concepts – In fact, gentrification appears to set the stage for subsequent youthification to occur. Gentrification raises prices/rents, which has generally resulted in a decline in unit size of condominium apartments” (Moos et al., 2015).

This paper studies youthification in the Metropolitan Area of Cluj by answering the following two research questions:

- What are the areas affected by youthification?
- What are the traits of those young adults that might influence their needs and choices in matters of housing?

To reach our goal, we work towards identifying at least three types of young adult concentration patterns within the Metropolitan Area of Cluj. Thus, starting from the assumption that the urban core, the suburban settlements and the rural areas might support differing types of youthification, both in terms of intensity and in the type of young adults they attract, we build a snapshot of the situation recorded by the 2011 Population and Housing Census and its implications concerning the housing needs of young adults.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Defining the Terms

#### 2.1.1. The Metropolitan Area of Cluj

The Metropolitan Area of Cluj (Fig. 1) consists of a voluntary association between the city of Cluj and 17 of its surrounding communes.

However, when using this term, we refer to a larger area, which comprises the settlements that are part of the association agreement and the commune of Feleacu, which, even though is surrounded by the Metropolitan Area, has withdrawn from the Association in the year of 2009.

The Metropolitan Association represents a form of urban-rural partnership under the terms of the European Spatial Development Perspective (Zonneveld and Stead, 2007). However, it does not correspond to any administrative level under Romanian Law.

#### 2.1.2. Young adults

Because “nowadays, no single event marks the passage from youth to adulthood” (Billari et al., 2008), we use the term of *young adults* in referring to individuals who, at

the 2011's Census, i.e. on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2011, had an age somewhere between 25 and 34 years. The age range chosen to delineate this group is more of a common convention, as we still lack of a clear definition of the term (Moos *et al.*, 2015; Moos, 2016).



Fig. 1. The Metropolitan Area of Cluj

### 2.1.3. Youthification

We use the term *youthification* (Moos, 2016) in the following sense: a higher than average spatial concentration of young adults. However, taking into consideration that we devote our attention to the Metropolitan Area of Cluj and, the thresholds we use might need additional refinements when studying other areas.

### 2.2. Research Strategy and Methods

Starting from the assumption that the urban core, the suburban settlements and the rural areas might support different types of youthification, we structured our research exercise in two main parts: The first part identifies and distinguishes between different areas affected by youthification (*cf.* Section 3), while the second part highlights some common traits of their young adult inhabitants (*cf.* Section 4).

We first used statistical information recorded by the 2011 Population and

Housing Census to build a snapshot of the existing situation. We then applied statistical thresholds for measuring the presence and the intensity of youthification within different areas at two differing scales: that of the Metropolitan Area and that of the urban core.

In simple terms, a threshold consists of the average value of young adults from the total population of the Metropolitan Area. Areas that pass this threshold are considered as having some degree of concentration of young adult population.

Thereafter, a second threshold is calculated to assign these areas to one of the following two categories: areas with low and areas with high concentration of young adults. This second threshold is calculated as the average value of young adults from the total population, within the areas that have passed the first threshold.

In order to avoid any distortions, areas that have a far greater young adult presence are not taken into consideration when calculating the second threshold. They enter a separate category instead.

We then try to find some common traits characterising young adults within similar areas of youthification, by analysing indicators such as age groups, marital status or the number of children per woman. Taken together, these traits imply different needs and might influence differing choices in matters of housing, therefore proving relevant for our research.

## 3. Youthification in the Metropolitan Area of Cluj

### 3.1. Areas affected by youthification

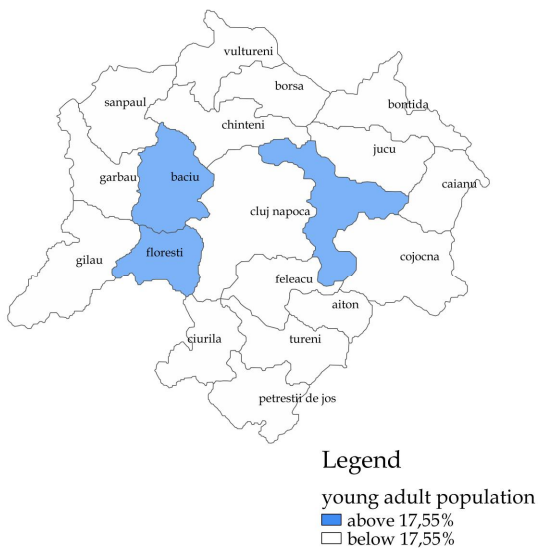
As stated earlier, we seek to highlight spatial concentrations of young adults in terms of a calculated threshold. The paper uses the average value of young

adults from the total population, in order to establish two primary categories:

- Areas without a concentration of young adult population, i.e. less than average values;
- Areas with a concentration of young adult population, i.e. values above the average.

We subsequently remove Florești from the latter category, as the very large proportion of young adults within its population puts Florești in a subcategory of its own, and we recalculate a new average for the remaining settlements. Thus, the following two subcategories take shape:

- Areas with a low concentration of young adults;
- Areas with a high concentration of young adults.

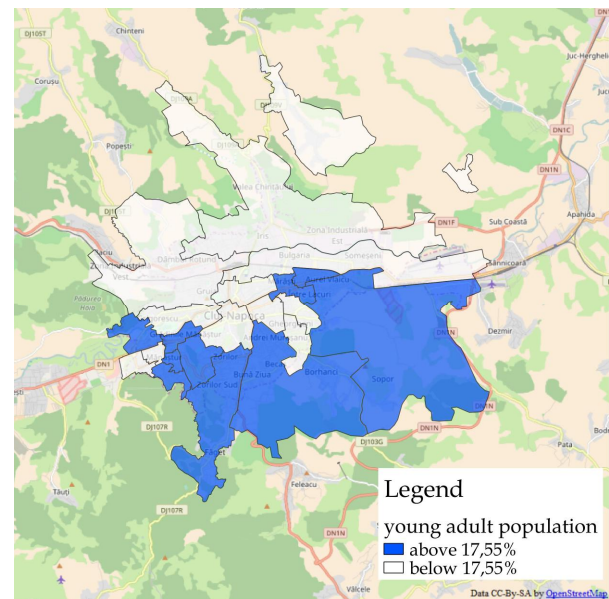


**Fig. 2.** Young adult population in the Metropolitan Area of Cluj (data source: The National Institute of Statistics)

Based on the data of the 2011 Population and Housing Census, the average concentration of young adults at the Metropolitan level is 17.55%, a figure which is above the national average of 14.04%. By using this value as a first threshold, one can observe that three of

the suburban satellites of Cluj (Apahida, Baciu and Florești) display higher than average concentrations of young adults (Fig. 2). This fact is not surprising, considering that most of the urban growth worldwide takes place nowadays at the urban fringe (Andersen *et al.*, 2011; Ekers *et al.*, 2012).

When focusing upon the city proper, we find out that the municipality of Cluj has a young adult population above the 17.55% threshold (Fig. 3). In addition, we can observe that all areas that have higher concentrations of young adults lie in the southern part of the city.



**Fig. 3.** Young adult population in Cluj (data source: The National Institute of Statistics)

It is interesting to note, however, that these areas differ in matters of the existing housing stock. Thus, while most of the housing stock within neighbourhoods such as Mănăștur or Zorilor consists of high-density apartment buildings that were built almost exclusively during the large-scale urbanisation of the socialist period (Mykhnenko and Turok, 2008), the former colonies of Făget, Becaș, Borhanci



and Sopor, which have nowadays become neighbourhoods, low density housing is prevalent. Here, single-family homes are usually the norm. Chaotic mixes of apartment buildings and single-family homes are also present in the Bună-Ziua and Europa neighbourhoods, denoting a severe malfunctioning of the Romanian planning system under conditions of real estate pressure.

Returning to the metropolitan scale once more, Fig. 5 shows Florești in a distinct category, justified by the fact that its young adult population is around 10% greater than that of any other area under study.

We then calculated the second threshold, which returned the value of 19.16%. One can now easily observe that the city of Cluj exhibits areas with greater concentrations of young adults (Fig. 4) than the municipalities of Apahida and Baciou (Fig. 5).

population of Apahida and Baciou has increased by 30% and 25%, respectively, against a background of minute changes within the urban core. During the same period, the population of Florești has nearly tripled.

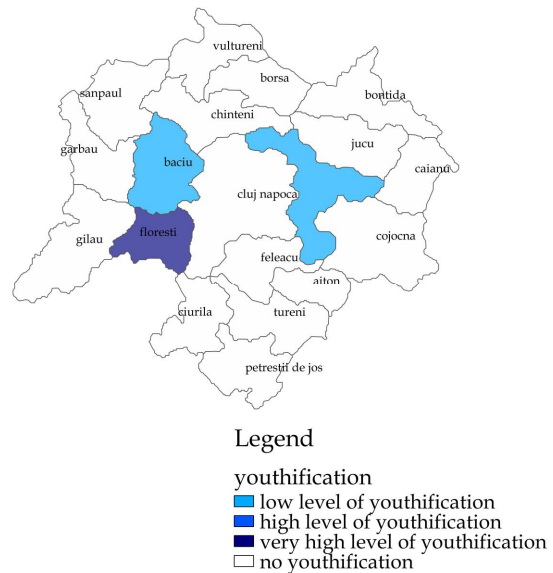


Fig. 5. Youthification in the Metropolitan Area of Cluj (data source: The National Institute of Statistics)

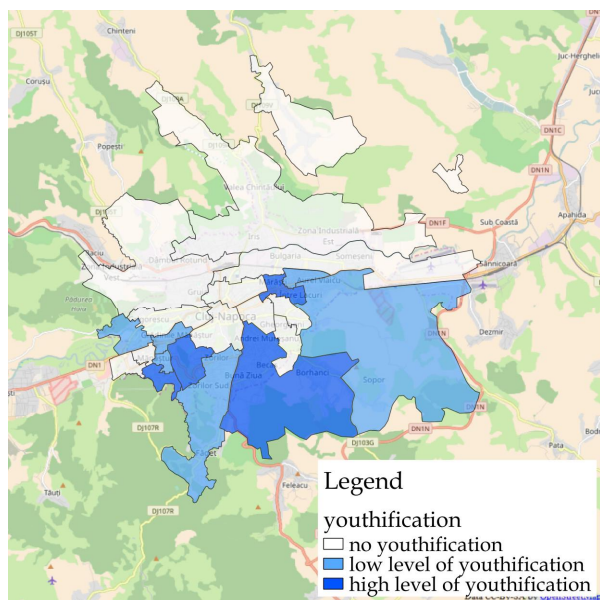


Fig. 4. Youthification in Cluj (data source: The National Institute of Statistics)

### 3.2. Is it really youthification?

The demographic evolution within the Metropolitan Area of Cluj between the years 2004 and 2013 shows that the

It is also worth mentioning that the proportion of people in the age group of 20-39 years, which includes, but is not limited to young adults, has increased considerably both in Apahida and Baciou, while approximately tripling in Florești (Coheci, 2015).

These evolutions took place within a national and Eastern European context marred by demographic decline and population ageing (Mykhnenko and Turok, 2008; Ivļevs, 2012). However, the city of Cluj maintained its vocation as an academic centre, thereby attracting young people from other regions every year.

It is therefore reasonable to state that within that same period there was an increase in young adults within the urban core and across its suburban satellites. This concentration seems to be a natural

consequence of the transition from a monocentric urban structure towards a more polycentric one (De Goei *et al.*, 2010).

The fact that the observed spatial concentration of people aged between 25 and 34 years comes as an effect of their in-migration, and that its amplitude surpasses the national average by at least 3.50%, it is furthermore reasonable to assume that a youthification process has occurred within some areas of the Metropolitan Area of Cluj. Moreover, areas that surpass the second threshold have more than 5% advance on the national average, i.e. more than a third, in relative terms, thus qualifying them as areas with a relatively high level of youthification.

In addition, Florești, a municipality that has more than double the national average of young adults, qualifies for a distinct category, i.e. areas with a very high level of youthification.

#### 4. Young adults of the metropolitan area

In order to better understand some of their specific needs in matters of housing, we now try to identify some of the common traits exhibited by the young adults living in the areas under study.

##### 4.1. Age group

Young adults, as defined in this study, are part of two distinct age groups, i.e. 25-29 years and 30-34 years, respectively.

One can observe that age group 30-34 is outnumbering the age group of 25-29 in each one of the settlements comprised within the Metropolitan Area (Fig. 6). While this might be a sign of an ageing population in the long term, in a short to medium term it has quite different implications, as the younger age group is

far more likely to still follow various education programmes (Fig. 7).

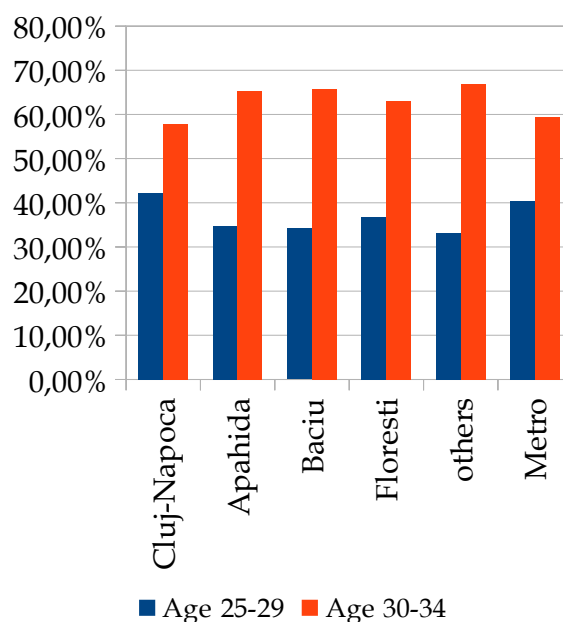


Fig. 6. Young adults by age groups (data source: The National Institute of Statistics)

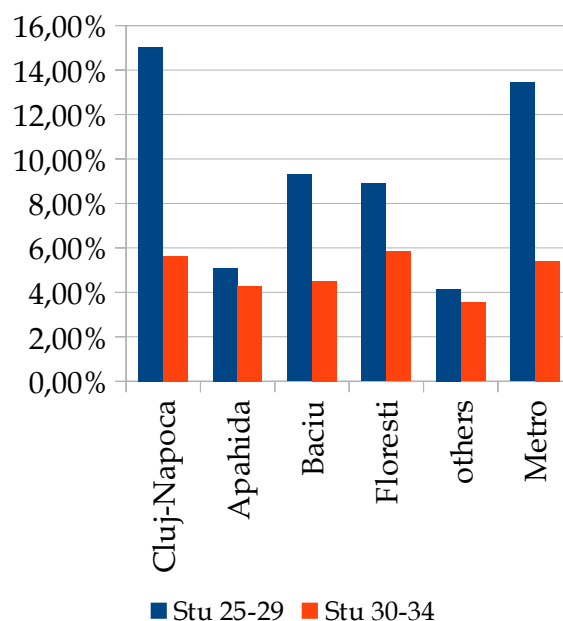


Fig. 7. Proportion of young adults enrolled in education by age groups (data source: The National Institute of Statistics)

We surmise that undergoing a form of education might indicate financial dependency, which, in turn, could translate into a dormant pressure on the housing stock.

4.2. Marital status

We use the marital status indicator as a proxy to determine a certain propensity of the population under study for living in certain types of households. Thus, while a marital status of *married* indicates that a person lives in a family-type household, an *unmarried status* might have a larger variety of possible implications. Hence, the person might either be divorced, widowed, living within a consensual communion or single.

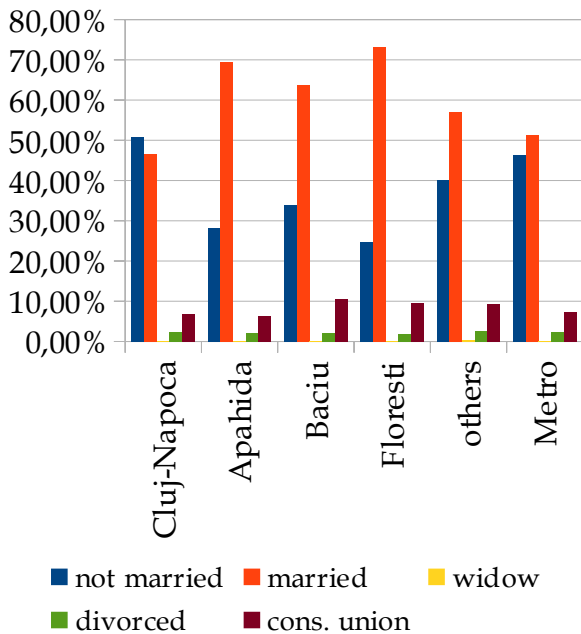


Fig. 8. Civil status of the young adults (data source: The National Institute of Statistics)

As Fig. 8 clearly shows, the marital status differs considerably at the metropolitan level (Fig. 8). Thus, while young adults in Cluj have close probabilities to be either married or not, the situation is quite different in Apahida, Baciu and Florești, where a difference is noticeable in favour of the *married* status. This fact might imply that young adults outside the urban core are more likely to need housing units that are suitable for couples and for small families. By assimilating those living in *consensual*

*communion* to those in *married* status, this need is further increased.

A higher number of divorced people might indicate a higher rate of divorciability. This translates into a greater probability of increasing the total number of households by splitting them, thus putting an additional pressure on the housing stock.

4.3. Number of children per woman

Politically incorrect at first glance, this indicator highlights a need for larger housing units as well as for specific urban amenities, such as kindergartens, playgrounds, schools or parks.

Within the Metropolitan Area, young adult women that live in Apahida, Baciu or Florești are more likely to have at least one child, while those in Cluj are more likely to have none (Fig. 9). In other words, there is a higher probability for a newly formed family with dependent children to choose the suburbs over the urban core (Kalogirou and Hatzichristos, 2007).

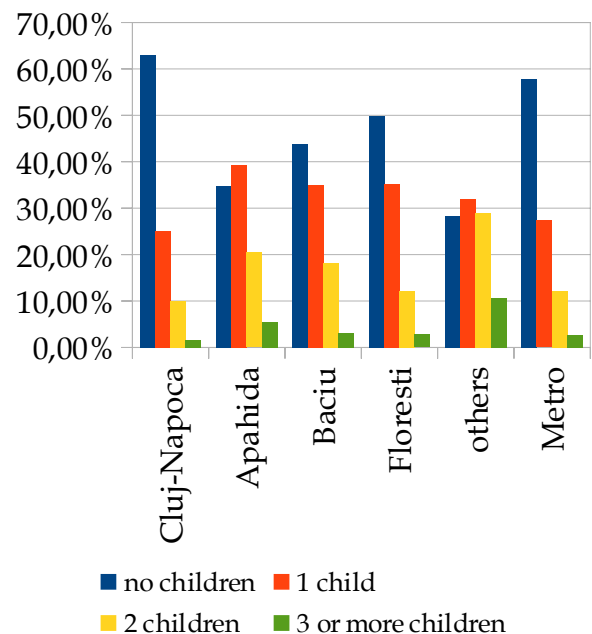


Fig. 9. Number of children per young mother (data source: The National Institute of Statistics)

## 5. Conclusions

The paper tried to adapt the relatively new concept of *youthification* (Moos, 2016) to a European context, by using a case-study analysis of the spatial concentration of young adults in the Metropolitan Area of Cluj. We now present our conclusions for the two main aspects analysed within the text, namely the areas affected by youthification, and the traits exhibited by their young adult inhabitants.

### *5.1. Areas affected by youthification*

As expected, areas affected by youthification are located either within the urban core of the Metropolitan Area, or in its close proximity (*cf.* Zanni *et al.*, 2008; Olfert and Partridge, 2011).

However, most of these areas, especially those displaying a high or very high level of youthification, are newly developed with their housing stock and urban infrastructure being of a poor quality. The main advantage that they offer is that of a lower price for either buying or renting (Cocheci, 2015). This seems to be an important enticement for most young adults (*cf.* Moos *et al.*, 2015).

Nonetheless, housing prices do not act in isolation (*cf.* Drachal, 2016). We can therefore observe that, even though they might have cheaper housing and better urban infrastructure, areas situated in the proximity of former industrial platforms, such as the neighbourhoods of Iris or Bulgaria, are generally avoided. This fact might be due to a poignant image of deterioration induced by the presence of brownfields. Across the European Union, only a few countries have identified brownfields as a national policy issue and have begun tackling them accordingly (Baing, 2010). Unfortunately, Romania is not among them.

### *5.2. Common traits of the young adults in the Metropolitan Area of Cluj*

We noticed earlier that the younger age group of adults is more likely to have members enrolled in education. This fact suggests that a larger proportion of people aged 25-29, compared to that of people aged 30-34, might still have dependency relations that could further imply the presence of a latent need for new housing.

Concerning the distribution by age of young adults within the Metropolitan Area, one can observe that, while the proportion of people aged 30-34 is lower inside the urban core, that of people aged 25-29 is greater. Of course, in absolute terms, most of the young adults live in the urban core, irrespective of their age group. However, a higher concentration of the younger age group in the city than in the settlements around it might suggest housing choices made upon the proximity of urban amenities.

The other indicators we looked at, namely marital status and the number of children per young adult woman, give some information about the households inside areas of youthification. Thus, while the urban core equally attracts people that are married or live in a consensual communion, as well as those that do not belong to these categories, the situation changes in Apahida, Baciú and Florești. These areas are preferred by committed people. This is most likely because of the affordability of larger housing units in the suburban satellites as compared to the city, a fact further suggested by the location choice of young mothers.

### *5.3. Other findings*

An indirect effect of youthification is that it generates a different type of social homogeneity within the source areas of migration: “on the whole, it is the better-off



who move out, leaving behind marginalized communities with little power to tackle negative conditions" (Power, 2001). In the Metropolitan Area of Cluj, this effect can be observed in the more isolated of its rural settlements, which already show signs of population ageing and demographic loss. Population losses such as these might be a consequence of the out-migration caused both by a deprivation of basic household items (Shucksmith *et al.*, 2009; Ward and Brown, 2009) and by a backwash effect of polarisation (*cf.* Richardson, 1976). Furthermore, one must consider the fact that the city of Cluj and its suburbs attract young adults from other regions as well, thereby spreading this effect over areas larger than its metropolitan area.

Because of demographic uncertainty, flexible strategic planning seems to be mandatory today even for cities that have previously experienced growth (Wiechmann, 2008). At the same time, to tackle the negative effects in areas of out-migration there are two possible, not mutually exclusive, approaches: To confront the causes of urban shrinkage, and to eliminate its effects. For example, containing urban sprawl addresses one of the possible causes of urban shrinkage (Reckien and Martinez-Fernandez, 2011), while implementing urban regeneration strategies (Hulsbergen and Stouten, 2001; Bernt, 2009; Reckien and Martinez-Fernandez, 2011; Cocks and Couch, 2012) addresses one of its effects. In both cases, continuous monitoring of the urban form is recommended, in order to gain a clear and up-to-date image of the situation (Castano and Wadley, 2012).

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