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Haase, A.; Bontje, M.; Rink, D.; Couch, C.; Marcińczak, S.; Rumpel, P.; Wolff, M.

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24. Variations of urban regrowth – systematising driving factors and contextual conditions: the European perspective

Annegret Haase, Marco Bontje, Dieter Rink, Chris Couch, Szymon Marcińczak, Petr Rumpel and Manuel Wolff

INTRODUCTION

Urban regrowth has become an issue of discussion within the scholarly community since the 2000s. It relates to the changing situation across Europe whereby a considerable number of formerly shrinking cities have started to grow again. Former industrial cities that experienced decline during earlier decades, have seen both a return of population growth and economic recovery. Regrowing cities can be found in many different regions across Europe. Currently, regrowth represents one of the trajectories of European cities, next to continuous growth and shrinkage. There has emerged an increasing body of research that analyses the conditions and pathways of regrowing cities and the causes for new growth after shrinkage. One of the most important issues is to discuss which factors and contextual conditions are fostering or driving regrowth; another is the question on local variations of regrowth in relation to or dependence on factors and conditions driving it, and their interaction.

Set against this background, the chapter analyses factors driving the regrowth of formerly shrinking cities across Europe. The main objectives are:

1. to identify driving factors and contextual conditions that lead to/foster regrowth and discuss their interplay;
2. to illustrate variations of regrowth as it appears across Europe and show the impact of the identified factors and contextual conditions and their interplay and;
3. to elicit from this some key theses on the nature of urban regrowth and urbanisation in Europe at present and in the future, in particular considering also potential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (see the Introduction to this volume).

To respond to these research objectives, a comparative study of four formerly shrinking cities is presented, all of them showing variations of regrowth after shrinkage although in different shape and scope. All four cities show signs of economic recovery or even growth, but two have a regrowing population (Leipzig in Germany and Liverpool in the UK), while two are continuing to lose population (Łódź in Poland and Ostrava in Czechia). With the help of a comparative approach, it is possible to identify factors and contextual conditions that drive regrowth and to understand how their interplay impacts upon different sectors of urban development. Moreover, a four-city-comparison teaches something on the local variations of regrowth and helps to better identify specific and overarching driving factors.

Materials and Methods

This chapter is based on a comparative study of regrowth in four European cities that was carried out in 2019 and published as a journal article (Haase et al. 2021). Two of these cities saw demographic and economic regrowth (Liverpool and Leipzig), the two other cities saw continued population shrinkage but economic regrowth (Ostrava and Łódź). In contrast to the study, this chapter sets its focus on regrowth and the factors and conditions that cause it. The empirical part of the chapter focuses on the display of variations of regrowth as they occur across Europe. Variations include different scope and speed of regrowth, and regrowth driven by different key indicators, such as demographic or economic recovery, or both. The empirical illustration serves not as an in-depth empirical analysis but as illustration of our key theses on the character of regrowth across Europe. Based on this, some lessons learnt from this for the wider urbanisation debate are discussed.

Since we used the four cases in the previously mentioned journal article for a contrasting comparison as the most promising method of uncovering relationships between factors beyond those that are general cause–effect (Ward 2010; Wolff and Haase 2020), in this chapter, we have a different focus: taking the variations of the regrowth itself, we analyse which factors and contextual conditions are shaping it and bringing about either demographic and economic recovery together or just one dimension of it. The cases were selected according to the following criteria: (1) they are second-rank cities (large centres but not capital cities) that represent an important backbone of Europe’s urban landscape; (2) they represent cities with different forms of regrowth; and (3) they form part of different political and institutional contexts influencing urban regrowth.

In our analysis, we deliberately distinguish between factors and contextual conditions (Wolff and Haase 2020). Factors are processes/developments that drive or shape local urbanisation processes, including turns, for example, from shrinkage towards regrowth. These may relate to very different sectors, such as population development, job creation, investment, housing renovation and construction, development of the education and medical sectors as well as the current pandemic situation, and so on. Contextual conditions are conditions, settings or regulations that influence how a particular factor may or may not foster regrowth at the local level. Contextual conditions operate at different levels, from local to national or European Union (EU). Contextual conditions also include agency, attitudes and values, decision-making, leadership and governance, cooperation, networking, and so on. Factors and contextual conditions are operating together. Factors identified at supra-local scales that are assumed to stimulate regrowth are embedded in, and premised upon, pre-existing institutional structures, making their social and spatial effects highly contingent on local economic, political and demographic contexts. While some factors are sweeping across Europe (for example, deindustrialisation and migration), they may have different effects in the East and the West; for instance, the shift of manufacturing industry from West to East in the twenty-first century. The massive East to West migration after 2004 is another example that sets considerably different conditions for population regrowth in sending and receiving countries.

THE REGROWTH DEBATE: A BRIEF HISTORY

Regrowth after shrinkage is not a new issue. First observations and analyses of a possible revival of inner or core cities, after a long period in which many (inner cities) had fallen out of grace, were discussed in the 1960s and 1970s by urban studies researchers and urban planners in Europe and North America. Reurbanisation was seen as more than just a return to the city; it also meant qualitative changes, such as new urban forms, mixed-use areas and the idea of urban conservation. The same period also saw extensive work on urban regeneration and gentrification.

Regrowth has been analysed and described with different concepts and approaches, for example, reurbanisation, resurgence or revival, and in different contexts. An influential approach in the 1970s and early 1980s was to perceive urban regrowth and shrinkage as two stages of an urbanisation cycle that all city regions go through (Klaassen and Scimeni 1981; van den Berg et al. 1982). In these models, shrinkage is represented by the second phase, suburbanisation, when the core city loses population and the hinterland grows, and the third phase, disurbanisation, when both core city and hinterland lose population. Regrowth, or reurbanisation using van den Berg et al.'s (1982) terminology, was introduced as a hypothetical fourth stage of the urban cycle. Reurbanisation would be reached when the core city, in contrast to its hinterland, showed relative or even absolute population regrowth. Urban life-cycle models, however, did not explain which factors and contexts lead to further shrinkage or promote reurbanisation. Meanwhile, since the 1980s, many cities in Europe and North America have returned to growth, but many cities kept stagnating or shrinking. A more recent strand of discussion, inspired by cyclic models, emphasises the reconcentration of population in large cities, set against an overall regional context of shrinkage: core cities as places of growth or stabilisation in a context of predominating (regional) decline (Herfert 2007; Couch et al. 2009). According to these studies, large cities either remain as the only places without decline, or recover first from decline, or become destinations for inward migration owing to their amenities and infrastructures (Rink et al. 2012).

Reurbanisation and the revival of inner cities has also been analysed in relation to demographic, household or housing change (for example, Buzar et al. 2007; Haase et al. 2010; Karsten 2014; Wolff et al. 2016) and/or in the context of urban renaissance policy or neoliberal urban development (Stead and Hoppenbrouwer 2004; Storper and Manville 2006; Colomb 2007). Thus far, the debate on 'resurgent cities' (Cheshire 2006, p. 1231) and the impacts of population growth on urban development is fuzzy, while systematic reviews (for example, Haase et al. 2005; Brake and Urbanczyk 2012) do not yet go beyond a variety of connotations and contexts that relate to regrowth or reurbanisation.

Factors and Contextual Conditions Driving Urban Regrowth

In two influential recent comparative studies of regrowth, an inventory of potential drivers of regrowth is suggested. Based on a comparative study of various 'phoenix cities', Power et al. (2010) and Power and Katz (2016) see the following factors as crucial: land reclamation and environmental upgrading; sprawl containment; improvement in transport infrastructure; physical redesign and restoration; neighbourhood renewal; creation of jobs; building new skills in the population; civic leadership and increased participation; social inclusion; and new publicly sponsored agencies that help to deliver change.

In another comparative work on the remaking of post-industrial cities, Carter (2016) concludes that regrowth should be understood as a stepwise process that takes time. The most important supporting factors for this process are considered to be: the consideration of the metropolitan (not the urban) scale; the need for a long-term vision; the development of a sustainable planning strategy; the need for alliances and partnerships, strong leadership and citizen engagement; diversification of the economy; a strengthening of the central city; investment in education, culture, quality of life, heritage and urban design; and a readiness to take risks.

A key factor that is overlooked in both studies, concerns active population policy and provision to attract and retain crucial groups for reurbanisation: young households, families and early-stage professionals. Although both studies say something about the interaction of factors, little is being said about which (combinations of) factors should come first or are most important. Added to this, the focus in these studies seems to be on what cities or city regions can do themselves. No systematic distinction is made in respect of the nature of factors – little is being discussed about whether they can be initiated and driven by local actors, decision-making or resources, or whether their realisation depends on external policy or decision-making levels. We think, however, this is crucial to evaluate the chances of a city to see regrowth or to pursue successfully an active pro-regrowth policy. This problem is most aptly expressed in the term ‘phoenix cities’, as if cities can overcome the structural crisis of shrinkage by their own strength. In practice, though, many regrowing cities will need external sources, such as national or international public or private investment, to make regrowth happen.

Rink et al. (2012) addressed these ambivalences and risks for a sustained new growth after shrinkage. In particular, they mention the economic fragility and continuous dependency of regrowing cities on external decisions (for example, by large-scale investors and the political choices of national or regional governments) and on external factors, such as national or regional economic circumstances, issues also emphasised by Dembski et al. (2021). Further, on the demographic side, Rink et al. (2012) suggest that the in-migration trends that have been a key factor in a great deal of observed regrowth can change quickly, making them, unlike natural population change, difficult to build into long-term population projections. They also underline the ambivalence of those success factors that were identified at the time of the research: what today may support regrowth, may tomorrow lead to new problems and hinder regrowth.

A hitherto under-researched and potential type of influencing factor that impacts on regrowth processes and patterns are external shocks and crises, such as those experienced after the global financial crisis of 2008 and with the COVID-19 pandemic (see the Introduction to this volume) and their respective anti-crisis policy responses (see, for example, Bernt and Rink 2010; Batty 2020; Bereitschaft and Scheller 2020).

While several factors may be responsible for regrowth, their impact depends on: (1) their interplay and contingency; (2) the combinations in which they are present or absent; and (3) the impacts of contextual conditions on those factors.

VARIATIONS OF REGROWTH: EMPIRICAL OBSERVATIONS

In this section, we illustrate variations of regrowth across Europe, with a focus on the identification of factors and contextual conditions driving regrowth. We provide short storylines and analyses without going into detail but still showing how variations of regrowth depend on and

emerge through the interplay of driving factors and contextual conditions; for more details of the cases shown, see Haase et al. (2021). In the subsequent section, we provide an overarching summary of the variations found (especially in Table 24.1).

Local Stories of Regrowth: Examples from across Europe

Leipzig was one of the fastest growing cities in Europe and the fifth largest city in Germany before the Second World War. After 1945, the population steadily decreased but dropped dramatically after German reunification in 1990. This loss was caused by out-migration, driven by deindustrialisation, falling fertility rates and suburbanisation. To counteract shrinkage, the federal government made massive public investments in transport, technical and social infrastructures, housing, higher education, the labour market and ecological revitalisation, and subsidised private investment in industries and services. To counteract housing vacancies (which peaked in 2000 at 20 per cent of the total stock) and balance the local housing market, thousands of flats were demolished as part of a state-funded regeneration programme (Rink et al. 2011). At the beginning of the 2000s, the first signs of an economic upswing became visible though new investments partly sponsored by public money. Modest inner-city reurbanisation (0.5–1 per cent annually) started after 2000. From 2002–03 onwards, a bipolar picture emerged: a (re)growing city, together with shrinking surroundings. This bipolarity was fostered by in-migration from the city region and elsewhere in eastern Germany; suburbanisation started to reverse (Nuisl and Rink 2005). After 2011, population growth became more dynamic with more than 10 000 immigrants per year. In addition, especially in 2015–16, the city experienced a substantial influx of refugees. Reindustrialisation and new economic growth created more than 80 000 new jobs between 2005 and 2019, raising employment and decreasing the rates of unemployment. In the 2010s, after years of stagnation and demolitions, new (upmarket) housing was built, housing vacancies decreased to 4.5 per cent in 2018 (Haase et al. 2021). Currently (at the beginning of the 2020s), some larger neighbourhoods are being constructed, to provide housing for the large number of newcomers. The inner city has been improved by integrated master plans, and the establishment of a green belt has helped limit suburbanisation. In the 2010s, Leipzig was among the fastest growing cities in Germany (approximately 2 per cent per year), and the city was ranked in surveys as one of the most attractive cities in Germany. Leipzig's attractiveness is also reflected by the city being one of the few large German cities to continue to record moderate population growth in 2020.

There are several factors that together have led to regrowth after around 2000, which include: (1) direct and indirect public support for new large-scale economic investment and job creation; (2) massive public investment (from the national government, the federal state of Saxony and the EU) in practically all areas of urban development; (3) huge subsidies for the renovation of housing in the core city, and the availability of moderately priced and attractive housing; (4) ecological restoration (air, water and brownfield sites) and (5) improvement of Leipzig's image as a highly liveable city. However, Leipzig's economic regrowth remains fragile and dependent on non-local investment and external support. Population trends are also cyclical and may change again, for example, owing to the current COVID-19 crisis.

In Liverpool, from the 1950s to the 1990s, economic change and deindustrialisation reduced employment and population. Liverpool was one of the first cities in Europe to experience significant industrial restructuring and change. Employment across the Merseyside city region fell from 459 000 in 1981 to 382 000 in 1991, while employment in Liverpool (the core city)

fell from 254 000 to 195 000. Disurbanisation occurred as the population migrated away from the city region in search of work, and suburbanisation pushed a growing proportion of the remaining population beyond the core city to the periphery (Sykes et al. 2013). The population of Liverpool fell from 768 000 in 1951 to 503 700 in 1981 and then to 439 500 in 2001. Whereas the core city had accommodated nearly 48 per cent of the city region's population in 1951, this had fallen to around 32 per cent by 2001.

Central government's response was initially aimed at stimulating inward industrial investment. While this policy had some success, a great deal of the new investment was at the periphery of the city region. However, things gradually began to improve. First, national economic growth improved from the mid-1990s. While the greatest benefit was experienced in London and the Southeast, the effects spread across the country. Similarly, the first signs of reurbanisation emerged in the 1990s and had become an established trend across the country by the millennium. Secondly, by the 1990s, suburbanisation had become less problematic. Over the previous two decades, most of the city's older housing stock had been refurbished and benefited from local environmental improvements. Policies encouraged and subsidised the redevelopment of former industrial and commercial premises for residential use. The Merseyside green belt prohibited development on rural land at the urban periphery. Together these layers of policy drastically reduced suburbanisation. Thirdly, the rapid deindustrialisation of the 1970s and 1980s had slowed by the mid-1990s and was replaced by a more stable economic situation. A series of economic regeneration initiatives emerged (Couch 2003; Meegan 2003; Sykes et al. 2013), including infrastructure and economic regeneration projects supported through Objective One of the European Regional Development Fund and the urban renaissance agenda promoted by the UK central government. By the millennium, a large part of the city's brownfield land had been redeveloped for beneficial use. Housing vacancy rates fell back from their historic high of 7.5 per cent to around 4.5 per cent in 2015 (Couch and Cocks 2013). During this period, Liverpool also witnessed expansion in higher education, health, financial services, information technology and biosciences. The city was designated a European Capital of Culture in 2008 and subsequently pursued a strong policy of cultural and tourism-led regeneration.

As a consequence, employment began to rise again and population began to return to the city. Through the decades of restructuring, employment in the core city declined faster than the city region average but, since 2010, employment in Liverpool (the core city) has grown more rapidly than in Merseyside (the city region) as a whole: a more urban economy is emerging. With regrowth has come a change in employment structure: after 2010 employment in manufacturing, utilities and construction finally began to increase after many years of decline, together with substantial growth in leisure and tourism, retailing, wholesaling and logistics, financial and professional services. However, in response to the 2008 financial crisis, central government cut its funding to local councils, leading to a drop in employment in local public administration, education and health. By 2021, the population of the core city had returned to 498 000, a figure not seen since the 1980s.¹

Thus, Liverpool has turned from shrinkage to regrowth as a result of: (1) national economic growth, especially in urban economies and the service sector; (2) ending of the period of rapid industrial restructuring; (3) consistent long-term regeneration strategies, including substantial EU and central government funding; (4) strong restraints on peripheral growth; and (5) intensification of development within the core city.

From the mid-nineteenth century, the city of Łódź became a mill town dominated by the textile industry. The end of the so-named *Textilopolis* came in the early 1990s together with the downfall of socialism in Poland (Marcinićzak and van der Velde 2008; Szafrńska et al. 2019). Over the next three decades (1988–2017), Łódź lost 165 000 residents and the number of vacant apartments nearly tripled between 2003 and 2018. The share of employment in manufacturing fell by almost 20 per cent while the share of services in the total employment increased significantly (Marcinićzak 2009).

The economy began to recover in the late 1990s, mainly spurred on by foreign direct investments in manufacturing industry, which gained momentum after Poland's accession to the EU (Marcinićzak and Sagan 2010). A main reason for this was that Łódź had a large pool of available and cheap workforce at that time. The socialist-era industrial districts in the periphery of Łódź were reindustrialised first; the pre-socialist industrial areas of the inner city remained derelict until the mid-2000s when some sites gradually began to attract residential development, leading to gentrification (Holm et al. 2015). The approach to urban regeneration changed significantly after 2004 when new funds became available, and included the comprehensive regeneration of public tenements, a large-scale redevelopment project in the city centre, a new central railway station and additional cultural facilities.

Łódź has not made the turn from demographic shrinkage: the population is still in decline. The reasons appear to be mainly demographic: continuing suburbanisation, a low birth rate, an ageing society, and migration abroad after 2004.

For the past 15 years, the city has been losing residents, but the economy has been growing and unemployment has been falling. The development of Łódź's economy parallels the rapid economic development of Poland in the twenty-first century, and shows how the city benefited from shifting manufacturing industry from the West of Europe to the East. Next to the Mazowiecki and Dolnośląski regions, Łódź noted a steady (uninterrupted) growth in gross domestic product from 2000 to 2018; the economy was on the rise even in the middle of the most recent global economic crisis. Economic regrowth was largely externally stimulated either by massive private/public investments in transport infrastructure (Łódź represents one of the largest highway junctions in Poland) or foreign direct investments in manufacturing industry and services. More recently, Łódź has gained new jobs in the business-process-offshoring sector and the information technology sector. Currently, the main problem limiting faster economic development is the shortage of labour, highly skilled workers in particular.

Thus, irrespective of the continuous economic development over the past decade, Łódź has not turned from population shrinkage to regrowth. Broadly, this paradoxical situation may stem from the massive flows of people and investments between the East and the West of Europe. However, the national, regional and local contexts matter too. Nationally, the population is ageing and declining, yet suburbs are growing around most large and medium-sized cities. Łódź is ageing faster than other large cities and has experienced uncontrolled suburbanisation owing to a lack of comprehensive spatial planning and delayed regeneration of its run-down city centre. It also suffers from a negative media image (known as the fallen city) that deters inward migration.

Ostrava looks back at more than 160 years of economic and population growth based on hard-coal mining (1830–1989) and since 1990 has been experiencing continuous shrinkage of population and economy. In 1990 the population reached its peak, with 331 219 inhabitants, but had declined to 284 982 by 31 December 2020. Ostrava currently remains mainly an industrial city with environmental pollution, social exclusion and a controversial image.

Despite a decline in population, Ostrava has experienced a very low level of housing vacancy owing to a shortage of supply and high demand. Employment in the mining sector in the whole Ostrava agglomeration decreased from 115 000 (in 1989) to 6000 (in 2020). According to government plans, all mines in the Ostrava region will be closed by 2023. The situation of people employed in heavy industries was similar to that in the mining industry with a decrease from 70 000 (early 1990s) to 7000 (2020). The manufacturing sector covers 31 per cent of total employment, the same as in the 1990s, but the structure has changed – currently, the number of jobs in mining, metallurgy and the chemical industry have decreased considerably, while jobs in automotive and electro technical industries have increased, also owing to the increased impact of foreign direct investments.

When looking at the current situation and potential futures, the picture is complex and shows a decoupling of economic and demographic trends. Ostrava's economic base has been mainly reindustrialised and has not followed the same post-industrial route of similar West European cities with a prevailing service sector. While there has been a considerable increase in jobs, income levels are generally lower than in the cities of Prague or Brno. After 1990, Ostrava pursued an external low-road strategy based on low wages and low costs of inputs and subsidies, which attracted foreign direct investments into the region. Thus, Ostrava has been successful and more than 40 000 new jobs were created in the 2000s, especially in the automotive industries (Rumpel et al. 2013). There has also been a significant increase of jobs in services and information and communication technology industries. While there has been some government investment in infrastructure, it is limited in scale and not concentrated on priorities such as new modern housing or creation of quality jobs.

Despite the signs of economic stabilisation and recovery, population development remains negative: out-migration from Ostrava is stronger than in-migration into the city region. One push factor of out-migration is the air pollution and its related bad image. Although this was already significantly reduced, it remains one of the main reasons for the recovery.

Further out-migration from the city might also be related to failures of the public sector in the field of planning policy. Policy-makers placed emphasis mainly on economic regeneration via reindustrialisation, manufacturing development, and service sector development, especially information and communication technology. While there has been public sector support for investors and private companies, there has been a lack of similar support for city centre re-development or housing policy during 1990–2020. This neoliberal approach to planning has supported suburbanisation and massive urban sprawl.

In summary, Ostrava has seen improvement in many areas during the past 30 years but there is still a lot of room for improvements. Substantial qualitative changes in economic and urban structures have been achieved. While Ostrava has managed to attract investors, diversify and create jobs in new economic sectors, such as automotive, and carry out basic changes to urban structures, these have not been sufficient to contribute to population regrowth. Thus, Ostrava is likely to continue to be a shrinking city for the foreseeable future. However, in comparison with similar old industrial cities in Central Europe, Ostrava can be considered successful in the way it is transforming from a mining-industrial city to a stronger role of information and communication technology, research and development, education, retail, business services, health care and social services. Institutional changes took place from 2015 to 2019, leading to changes in the networks of stakeholders and decision-makers responsible for the local and regional development in the Ostrava agglomeration.

Table 24.1 *Driving factors and contextual conditions shaping variations of regrowth*

Driving factors	Contextual conditions
Economic regeneration and job creation, which initially depends mostly on external investment and financing, but also requires sustained and coordinated local public management (e/l)	Political and institutional framework with orientation on welfare orientation, focus on sustainable development and inward development (e)
Revitalisation of the city centre in combination with other investment supporting the improvement of local living conditions (for example, housing, public spaces, green spaces, cultural facilities, and so on) (e/l)	Sustained and coordinated local public leadership and management for different policy sectors (l)
Control of suburbanisation combined with strongly inward-looking planning policy (l/e)	Availability and use of EU/national/regional funding schemes that support regrowth (e)
(Depending on the above factors) demographic regrowth driven by inward migration and recovery of natural growth (l/e)	Level of dependence on foreign capital and direct investment (e)
	Job opportunities, availability of housing and levels of quality of life (l)

Note: (e) = external factor/condition; (l) = local factor/condition.

Source: Own elaboration.

WHY DO CITIES SEE REGROWTH AFTER SHRINKAGE? A SYSTEMATISATION

When considering different examples of regrowth, we conclude that not one but several driving factors and contextual conditions are responsible for the occurrence, scope and speed of regrowth. Factors also interact and can foster or strengthen each other. The same applies to contextual conditions at multiple scales, from local to EU, which support driving factors or developments that foster and/or stabilise regrowth. The absence of driving factors and/or contextual conditions may, meanwhile, weaken the scope and speed of regrowth or can lead to a decoupling of, for example, demographic regrowth and economic recovery.

Table 24.1 provides a summary of (1) driving factors and (2) contextual conditions that enable and drive regrowth and its variations as we found them in the empirical examples in the previous subsection. It also indicates at which level those factors or contextual conditions operate – the external or the local, that is related to the city itself and its region.

Table 24.1 shows how driving factors and contextual conditions can operate together and how much contingency exists between them. This makes it, on the one hand, challenging to distinguish them clearly from each other. On the other hand, this complication shows by its very existence how closely external and local developments operate together in shaping variations of local urbanisation processes. In Liverpool and Leipzig, regrowth was facilitated by a close interaction between a contextual framework that clearly and deliberately prioritised inward development with the help of a strong role of municipality/public leadership and management, and driving factors that were eased or pushed by this framework. Population regrowth, in this respect, represents a dependent factor since it is contingent to a certain economic recovery, availability of jobs and affordable and attractive housing in preferred locations as conditions that were shaped by the contextual setting described previously. Looking at the examples of Łódź and Ostrava, we found a de-coupling between continued demographic regrowth and economic recovery, which is mainly owing to the absence of a contextual setting

that, for example, supports inward migration to the inner city owing to a lack of accessible and affordable housing in the core city and the absence of a clearly inward-orientated urban policy.

Table 24.1 also shows that very often, factors and contextual conditions include a combination of external and local regulations, resources or decision-making. Although there are some factors or conditions that operate exclusively or mainly on either the external or local level, more important is that, in many instances, there is a high level of dependency and contingencies between the local and upper levels. That is, on the one hand, shrinking cities are dependent on external political and institutional frameworks, funding and decision-making for a successful turn towards regrowth or for sustaining regrowth; on the other hand, the commitment and motivation of a city's decision-makers and societies to prioritise such a turn is indispensable as well.

Looking at the interplay of factors which is crucial as we noted previously, we see from the storylines that not just economic recovery or job creation and investment are needed to stimulate urban population growth. The neoliberal assumption that economic growth alone is a solution for shrinking cities is too simplistic; examples such as Liverpool and Leipzig show that external support, public investment and a welfare orientation are crucial in supporting local economic restructuring and greatly helped to create the preconditions for population regrowth. These two examples also show that a strong public commitment also helps to sustain growth by supporting the creation of more attractive living conditions (including housing, public spaces, green spaces and cultural facilities). As regards sustainable development, the multiplier effects of this investment and population growth should stimulate further economic growth and make the city less dependent on external private or public funding in the future. The examples of Łódź and Ostrava show how the absence of this factor leaves the cities in a situation where, despite economic recovery, population regrowth does not take place. In both these cities, the absence of attractive and affordable housing in the core city as a main factor of quality of life, together with the lack of control for suburbanisation, has led to a situation where even the creation of new jobs does not lead to population regrowth in the core city.

Economic regeneration and employment growth in shrinking cities are usually not driven by local resources or they occur independently from external (funding or investment) decisions as these cities are resource-poor, at least in the phase of early or non-consolidated regrowth. Instead, they are heavily dependent on national and international decisions and funding. Local factors such as the availability of affordable and attractive inner-city housing and suitable areas for the settlement of larger industries are favourable contexts, but work only in combination with external support. Regrowing cities are usually dependent on external economic decisions for a long time while their economic situation remains fragile; the more dependent cities remain from external investment, the more fragile they are. They continue to be, at least for a mid-term period, what Power et al. (2010, p. 3) defined as 'weak market cities'.

The examples showed that the variation of regrowth which we see in a city also heavily depends on the policy orientation at the national level; at least, this is what we found in our cross-European analysis. Comprehensive regrowth covering not just the economy but also living and housing conditions of people and the shape of the built and public sphere of the city can be reached only under conditions of a welfare-orientated national policy, reliable and long-term planning frameworks, and strong public leadership and funding. These conditions are also favourable for initiating and sustaining private investment. In the absence of these conditions, most likely economic recovery would occur, as in Ostrava and Łódź, but not a demographic, housing and public space recovery of the core city; that is, we would see a variation of one-sided regrowth and decoupled economic, demographic, housing and public space

development leading to an unsustainable way of development. Still, these instances are very different again from cities that see no variation of regrowth – either economic or demographic.

Shrinking cities are thus not ‘phoenix cities’ (Power et al. 2010) that can rise from their industrial ashes under their own steam, at least when more than a pure economic recovery depending on external developments is the target. A combination of factors and contextual conditions that operate both on the local and upward level are needed to bring about sustainable regrowth including economy, population and quality of life.

WHAT CAN BE LEARNT FOR THE WIDER URBANISATION DEBATE AND FOR THE FUTURE OF URBANISATION?

This final section discusses our results in light of lessons learnt, new questions and possible impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lessons Learnt and New Questions Arising for the European Urbanisation Debate

The economic base of regrowing cities is usually particularly fragile and vulnerable to external influences. As regards economic growth theories, growing cities must necessarily be a destination for both labour and capital flows. While population growth is an important indicator of urban change and a useful tool for comparison between cities, it alone is not sufficient to fully reflect the multidimensional nature of urban change. A more complex analysis is required. The relationship between economic development and population growth needs to be better understood. Any discrepancy between population and economic development trends for a city could also call into question the presumed utility of population as a key indicator in many existing conceptual models or heuristics of urban change. Moreover, the development of cities is not limited to their administrative boundaries. Processes such as the flows of people and labour, the spatial distribution of investment and the physical expansion of settlement structures suggest a different picture if the analytical framework is extended to the entire urban region.

Even with substantial funding and favourable national contexts, there is no certainty or inevitability that shrinkage will be followed by renewed growth. A city may experience an economic upswing but still lose population owing to suburbanisation, as examples from Central and Eastern Europe in particular show. National policies play a crucial role in stabilising shrinking cities. We can distinguish roughly between welfare state policy and neoliberal policy, disregarding here the many forms of both and between them.² While neoliberal policies only promote economic growth, welfare state policies relate to urban development in a more inclusive way. This helps to explain why cities in more welfare-orientated countries grow more broadly, whereas cities in more neoliberal contexts grow only economically. It seems that regrowth requires a multiple or inclusive policy approach in order to be successful. This type of approach encompasses economy and employment, inner-city development, inward-looking development and a coherent strategy.

Growth coalitions are being identified in urbanistic research as the key drivers of urban growth. These are relatively stable and overarching coalitions between elected politicians, banks and private as well as public companies with the aim of bundling competencies and concentrating resources to pursue successful growth-promoting policies. Growth policy is supply-side and its aim is to promote investment to generate economic growth, in particular

to create jobs. Investment in (future) growth pays off for all concerned in the form of, for example, profits, increased market share and opportunities, skills, power and influence, and higher tax revenues. Based on the concept of growth coalitions, some scientists have examined the specifics of shrinkage control and have created terms such as ‘grant coalitions’ (Bernt 2009, p. 754) or ‘shrinkage and stagnation coalitions’ (Haller and Altröck 2010, p. 158). While in respect of growth the actors have incentives to participate in the form of future returns, these are absent for shrinkage or consist merely in avoiding (excessively high) losses. The governance of regrowth emerges from these grant coalitions or shrinking coalitions, and will not be a classic growth coalition for a long time. This can be seen above all in that the actors are weak, and the returns on regrowth are low or in the distant future. This weakness cannot be compensated by strong local leadership as neoliberal models suggest. Instead, the very nature of grant coalitions is that they are dependent on public support. Thus, the dependence on external actors and decisions is also evident when looking at the governance side.

Regrowth does not necessarily have to be a stable or long-term trend in urban development; on the contrary, regrowth may well be followed by stagnation or, even, shrinkage. Economic or financial crises can be the trigger for this, or even a pandemic such as the current COVID-19 crisis, as we will explain in the next section. In this respect, growing cities are well advised not to focus exclusively on growth, but to include other urban developments in their planning. It is probable that the urban developments of the future will show themselves to be a succession and coexistence of growth, shrinkage and regrowth.

How Will the COVID-19 Pandemic Change the Debate on Regrowth?

At the time of writing this chapter, it seems still to be too early to tell what the structural impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on urban regrowth could be; however, initial evidence is there and needs to be discussed, even if only in a preliminary way (cf. also the Introduction to this volume). During the first and second waves of the COVID-19 outbreaks, several immediate impacts on cities could be witnessed. Recent research claims that cities, in comparison with rural regions, are worse affected by the pandemic and its consequences, such as in respect of the orientation of their local economic basis (for example, the effect on onsite retail, services and tourism) and associated employment structure (Kloiber et al. 2021). Demographically, next to the above-average death tolls among the elderly in particular, migration was impacted substantially by the pandemic and the policy responses to it. Complete and partial lockdowns, closed borders, and reduced flight traffic suddenly started to change the growth dynamics of cities; therefore, some (re)growing cities might again turn into stagnating or shrinking cities since their main source of population growth, that is, migration, has reduced dramatically. While this probably applies more in relation to international than to domestic migration, in many cities the latter may also have been affected, with numerous people reconsidering whether they still prefer to live in a large city with a high population density. Data identify sudden changes in population development that lead, for example, to the stagnation of hitherto growing cities (for example, Amsterdam, Stuttgart and Cologne³).

The lockdowns also caused or intensified economic and cultural/entertainment crises, in which large cities were again among the hardest hit places. The affected cities have lost additional factors that operate as drivers of regrowth, as we have seen previously. In addition, public and private investment priorities radically changed, shifting from longer-term investment programmes to short-term crisis management. There is initial evidence from

several countries that in urban regions, the demand for accommodation in central cities may decline while demand for dwellings in the suburbs and beyond may rise, increasing pressure for urban sprawl and reducing pressure for urban regrowth (Batty 2020). As in large German cities, such as Berlin or Stuttgart, the suburbanisation that occurred continuously since the early/mid-2010s has now become more visible as the cities lack immigration owing to the crisis. As regards the long-term consequences of the pandemic on cities, scholars' opinions are diverse: some conclude that the end of the era of urbanisation might be a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, at least for the cities of the Global North (Bereitschaft and Scheller 2020; Langen 2020); others argue that current lifestyle choices will in the future favour urbanisation, and the pandemic represents a risk but not the end of global urbanisation (Fiorella 2020). Although cities that suffer now from the economic effects of the crisis might benefit more from catch-up recovery after the pandemic, the trends towards increasing home office working and digitalisation may favour a strengthening of suburbanisation and a decline in attractiveness of inner-city housing and retail offerings (Bereitschaft and Scheller 2020, p. 11; Kloiber et al. 2021, p. 53). These trends are observable for all our examples, although with different scopes and speeds. While service- and tourism-orientated cities (Leipzig and Liverpool) have suffered more, industrial cities (for example, Ostrava) were affected less by economic decline and they experienced some decrease in environmental pollution owing to closures of large industrial sites during the first wave of the pandemic in spring 2020.

Since regrowing cities usually choose re-densification and benefit from choices for urban and city-minded lifestyles and housing career decisions, it will be crucial to observe which of the different arguments will be supported in reality within the next years. The role of the state as actor determining urban and regional policy might increase in countries where hitherto neo-liberal regimes operated, for example, in Czechia. Subsequently, the impact of the pandemic and the responding policies may also alter contextual conditions across boundaries.

Many of the factors discussed in this chapter as potential drivers of regrowth therefore may have to be questioned. However, the longer-term effects of COVID-19 on urban (re)growth remain to be seen. Will the changes we saw in 2020 create new longer-term trends, or will cities manage quickly to get back to pre-2020 development? Which cities will stop regrowth, and for what reasons, and which will endure regrowth? Will it still be the same factors that support or hinder the presence or absence of regrowth in the post-COVID-19 period that we identified before the crisis, or have new factors been added?

NOTES

1. Source: Liverpool City Council, Key Statistics at www.liverpool.gov.uk (accessed 1 April 2021).
2. The authors are aware that this is a simplification; there are different forms of welfare and neoliberal systems, and possibly also hybrid systems, including welfare and neoliberal features (Ther 2014).
3. <https://data.amsterdam.nl/specials/dataverhaal/corona-en-de-bevolkingsontwikkeling-in-amsterdam/d8efd02e-107e-4ef9-8c1d-d77826170508/> and https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2021/01/PD21_016_12411.html (both accessed 30 March 2021).

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