

The Trajectories of European Cities, 1960–2005

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ABSTRACT

Cities have been viewed for several decades as the places within Europe typically facing the greatest problems associated with economic and population decline. A contrasting view has emerged recently that identifies cities as sites of economic dynamism and social vitality. The paper offers evidence on population change for 310 cities across the whole of Europe to assess how their fortunes have changed over the period from the 1960s through to 2005. It reveals considerable diversity of experience, with one in seven cities described as resurgent on a strict definition of decline followed by growth. They are outnumbered by cities that have experienced continuous growth and those that have had a recent downturn. Taking a long-term overview, the growth of European cities has generally slowed over the last few decades. A short-term perspective suggests something of a recovery within the last five years. Growth and revival are more common in Western Europe and decline is more widespread in the East. The position of larger cities also appears to have improved slightly relative to smaller cities.

Key Words: city trajectories, population chang, resurgent cities