

# Ontologies of live-work mix in Amsterdam, Brussels and Stockholm: An institutionalist approach drawing on path dependency

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**Abstract:** This paper examines the impact of institutional frameworks on ontologies of 'live-work mix', i.e., the renewed intertwining of residential and economic uses in urban developments. We aim to understand how local housing and planning regimes influence the nature of live-work mix by comparing three contrasting institutional frameworks (Amsterdam, Brussels, Stockholm), using an institutionalist approach to governance drawing on the concept of path dependency. We address two research questions: how have each city's housing and planning regimes influenced current urban development strategies, and what ontologies of live-work mix do these regimes and strategies underlie. Based on a literature review, document analysis and exploratory interviews, we show that live-work goals are defined in instruments underpinned by different discourses and early planning directions, but in which housing supply is instrumental to economic growth. Market parties play an essential role in implementing these goals as a result of critical junctures and dependencies affecting the actors involved and their governance capacity. Overall, the local ontologies of live-work mix reflect broader city understandings and are either consistently oriented towards attractiveness or, on the contrary, overlapping between, sometimes, antagonistic agendas. Used sensitively, our analytical framework appears to be relevant to understanding the local mitigation of global developments.

**Key-words:** Housing regime; Institutional framework; Live-work mix; Path dependency; Urban development

## 1 Introduction

This paper examines the impact of institutional frameworks on the strategies cities use to reach a certain level of ‘live-work mix’ (Uyttebrouck et al., 2021). This concept refers to the renewed intertwining of residential and economic uses in urban developments at different scales. Live-work mix is developed in particular locations to enhance their residential and economic attractiveness (*ibid*). At the city level, live-work mix strategies rely on housing and planning policies, which are path-dependent. While urban policies aimed at providing attractive built environments have spread across contexts, divergences have been observed in the local evolution of housing provision, notably depending on the type and extent of state intervention. Therefore, institutional frameworks may impact local ontologies of live-work mix.

We aim to understand how local contexts influence the *nature* of this phenomenon. To fulfil this goal, we compare the housing and planning regimes of Amsterdam, Brussels and Stockholm, three large Northern-European cities belonging to contrasting institutional frameworks, using an institutionalist approach to governance focused on dependencies and, particularly, path dependency. The research questions examined are: how have each city’s housing and planning regimes influenced current urban development strategies, and what ontologies of live-work mix do these regimes and strategies underlie. For each city regime, we introduce the housing policies and planning traditions that affect the current urban development strategies setting live-work goals. Then, we discuss the divergences and convergences in these institutional paths to understand the roots, enablers, actors and instruments framing local ontologies of live-work mix. The analysis is based on a literature review, strategic and policy documents and 74 semi-structured, exploratory interviews with local experts.

The following section conceptualises the ‘live-work mix’ and connects it with changes in housing provision and urban development before introducing the concepts underpinning our institutionalist analytical framework. Section 3 then justifies our choice for comparative case-study research and summarises the data collected. Each city regimes and live-work mix strategies are introduced in section 4 before the discussion (section 5). The conclusion stresses the benefits and drawbacks of our analytical approach and pleads for the sensitive use of path dependency – and other dependencies inherent to governance paths – in housing and urban studies.

## 2 Live-work mix in path-dependent institutional frameworks

### 2.1 Housing, planning and live-work mix

Live-work mix has emerged under the ‘flexibilisation of labour markets’, contributing to blurring the temporal and spatial distinctions between the work and home spheres and affecting home meanings and practices (Bergan et al., 2020). Live-work mix is *indirectly* related to this paradigm shift, which happened under the development of information and communication technology (ICT) and the advent of the ‘new economy’ (Hutton, 2009). Conversely, it is *directly* related to structural changes in housing provision under

the transformation of welfare states (Bengtsson, 2001; Fahey & Norris, 2011; Hedin et al., 2012). Also, live-work mix illustrates the impact of the new economy on urban agendas. These direct drivers are framed here from a path-dependent perspective (see section 2.2).

Housing provision is the ‘process through which housing becomes available to users’ so that a housing regime corresponds to ‘the set of fundamental principles according to which housing provision is operating in some defined area (municipality, region, state) at a particular point in time’ (Ruonavaara, 2020, p. 10). Each regime reflects differences in the operating principles of housing provision (Dewilde & De Decker, 2016) and can be divided into periods. For example, after the second world war (WWII), interventionist and regulatory states *de-commodified* housing by bringing correctives to the housing market, which was mainly observed in social-democratic regimes with massive social/public housing development (Bengtsson, 2001; Dewilde & De Decker, 2016; Ronald, 2008). Conversely, liberal housing regimes (e.g., Belgium) backed homeownership much earlier. The regimes with de-commodified housing were subject to re-commodification from the 1970s onwards (Dewilde & De Decker, 2016). Local measures were taken throughout Europe to encourage housing privatisation (e.g., the Right-to-buy policy in the UK - see Hodkinson et al., 2013) and advocate for the private-rented sector (PRS) and homeownership (Fahey & Norris, 2011; Ronald, 2008). Since the global financial crisis (GFC), housing financialisation and flexibilisation, initially enabled by state institutions, have been accelerated (Aalbers, 2017; De Geus, 2021; Ryan-Collins, 2019).

At the urban level, live-work mix is a form of mixed-use development, adopted as a fundamental principle in urban policy, especially since the 1998 new Athens charter, and soon integrating city planning discourses (Hoppenbrouwer & Louw, 2005). Mixed-use development emphasises the efficient integration of diverse uses in well-connected locations (Grant, 2002) and higher-quality built environments (Hoppenbrouwer & Louw, 2005; Louw & Bruinsma, 2006; Mualam et al., 2019). Planners introduced it in urban development strategies, together with densification, to enhance environmental sustainability, social integration and economic development (Grant, 2002; Korthals Altes, 2019) in the context of accelerated globalisation and competitiveness. Cities have taken more proactive roles in the world economy, marketing themselves as knowledge cities and competing to attract highly skilled workers (Bontje et al., 2017; Bontje & Musterd, 2009; De Decker, 2009; Hansen & Niedomysl, 2009). Within this agenda, city regions have started to apply polycentric urban development principles (i.e., mixed-use urban cores connected through infrastructure), following a spatial-economic discourse (Healey, 1997), to reach more efficient, sustainable and competitive urban systems (Boussauw et al., 2018; Rader Olsson & Cars, 2011). Many cities have further developed policy instruments to enhance residential attractiveness and ‘creative’ live-work environments as part of the 2000s creative-class discourse and its instrumentation (Bontje et al., 2017).

Urban policies promoting live-work mix in attractive built environments seem to have spread across contexts. In contrast, housing provision is path-dependent, each context having its institutional path and cultural setting, which may lead to different ontologies of live-work mix and variations in understandings of cities. Ontology relates here to ‘what reality out-there is composed of’ (Law, 2004, p. 162). Engaging in an

ontological inquiry about the city allows avoiding ‘naïve objectivism’ (Farías, 2011). Our ontological approach examines the *social construction* (Haworth et al., 2004) of live-work mix based on specific institutional settings and dependencies. The ways users live and work in cities certainly affect ontologies of live-work mix, given the multiplicity of processes shaping a city (Farías, 2011). Nevertheless, our interest is in understanding the ontologies framed by the discourses apparent in the instruments setting live-work goals, the actors implementing them and their dependencies, and early planning directions and enablers (see section 5). Such a framing is consistent with an ‘ontology of becoming’, which understands planning as a ‘socio-spatial’ process involving actors – including entrepreneurial local governments – through institutional relations that allow them to establish strategies for spatial change (Albrechts, 2015; Boelens, 2021).

## 2.2 Comparing path-dependent institutional frameworks

We adopt an institutionalist approach to governance (e.g., Healey, 1997; Healey & González, 2005) focused on path dependency to compare local institutional frameworks. Path dependency draws on the idea that ‘...what has happened at an earlier point in time will affect the possible outcomes of a sequence of events occurring at a later point in time’ (Sewell, 1996 in Mahoney, 2000, p. 510). Using this concept requires examining the combination of historical sequences of contingent events (or occurrences), forming institutional patterns with deterministic properties that can be either ‘self-reinforcing’ or ‘reactive’ (Mahoney, 2000). On the one hand, self-reinforcing sequences result from the reproduction of institutional patterns with *increasing returns*, that is, increasing benefits that become more difficult to transform over time despite more efficient alternatives (*ibid*). On the other hand, reactive sequences consist of a succession of events which are each a dependent reaction to prior events (*ibid*). Another essential element of these processes, *critical junctures* are ‘moments of crisis’ during which new institutions are established in response to the failure of existing structures to pressing issues (Sorensen, 2018). During this process, contingent events lead to selecting a particular institutional arrangement amid alternatives, making it more challenging to return to other alternatives afterwards (De Decker, 2011a; Halleux et al., 2012; Mahoney, 2000; Sorensen, 2015). Conversely, the *lock-in* effect refers to the inevitable reproduction of a given institutional pattern (Mahoney, 2000).

These concepts are relevant to analysing housing institutions, including their efficiency, perceived legitimacy and the power relations they support (Bengtsson & Ruonavaara, 2010; Sørvoll & Bengtsson, 2018). Path dependency has also been widely used in urban studies (e.g., Taşan-Kok, 2015; Wilson & Dearden, 2011; Zwiers et al., 2016) and planning history (e.g., Sorensen, 2015). It was integrated into evolutionary governance theory, together with the concepts of *interdependencies* – i.e., the interrelations between, e.g., actors and institutions making them co-evolutionary (Sorensen, 2018) – and *goal dependencies* – i.e., the ‘shared visions’ or discourses affecting such a co-evolution (Van Assche et al., 2015)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> In R. Beunen, K. Van Assche, & M. Duineveld (2015), *Evolutionary Governance Theory: Theory and Applications*. Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-12274-8\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-12274-8_5)

Path dependency is suitable for our comparative study to examine the impact of institutions on outcomes and variations in the capacities to address institutional changes (Sorensen, 2015). Also, housing regimes are relevant to understanding housing outcomes and actors' interplay (Dewilde & De Decker, 2016). In our case, path dependency allows discussing the similarities and divergences between local institutional frameworks and strategies of live-work mix and identifying the actors involved and their governance capacities. Governance capacity refers here to the ability of institutions to operate as a collective actor (Healey & González, 2005). Nonetheless, path dependency was criticised for missing account of decision-making because it explains stability rather than change (Djelic & Quack, 2007; Kay, 2005) and tends to neglect the effect of power relations on decisions and conflicts (Crouch, 2001). Path dependency is more suitable for clear and linear paths than for complex systems (*ibid*). In these systems, rules are more subject to interpretation and subversion, which can generate institutional change (Sorensen, 2015). To tackle these issues, new views on path dependency integrate better gradual change in institutions and policies (Ruonavaara, 2020) and relate it to other dependencies interfering in governance paths (Van Assche et al., 2015). With these limitations and cautions in mind, the concept of path dependency remains suitable to stress the *emergence* of live-work mix in a *well-established* institutional framework.

### 3 Data and methods

This study builds upon comparative case-study research. Comparative housing studies are conditioned to the in-depth understanding of the contexts in which housing policies are applied (Hanrais, 1999; Haworth et al., 2004; Stephens, 2011). Also, comparing cities rather than nations allows stressing the active role of cities in today's globalised world (Hoekstra, 2019). The three cities selected for comparison are Amsterdam, Brussels and Stockholm (Table 1). Brussels Capital Region (BCR) is compared to Amsterdam and Stockholm municipalities because these power levels are responsible for housing provision and spatial planning. Brussels' region is responsible for public housing provision, and although the municipalities are involved in spatial planning, the urban development strategy is defined at the regional level. Amsterdam and Stockholm municipalities are also responsible for land allocation and spatial planning. The three cities have similar population sizes and belong to member-states of the European Union, but they have experienced different levels of housing provision and varying institutional capacities. Based on these similarities and differences, the three contexts are suitable for addressing the research questions.

**Table 1: Similarities and differences between the three cities**

\* Data retrieved from the Urban audit 2018 (all cities) and 2016 (Amsterdam city population) (Eurostat, 2018)

\*\* Mixed-sources including each city Statistics Office (see section 4)

Amsterdam	Brussels	Stockholm
Population*: 0,96 – 2,77 million inhabitants (city – urban region)  Social housing tradition	Population*: 1,2 – 2,67 million inhabitants (city – urban region)  Homeownership tradition  Housing stock**: 45% Homeownership, 45% Private	Population*: 0,95 – 2,31 million inhabitants (city – urban region)  Public housing tradition  Housing stock**: 51% Tenant-ownership, 25% Private rental

Housing stock**: 41% Social housing, 30% Homeownership, 29% Private rental housing	rental housing, 10% Public housing (including 7% social) Absence of spatial planning > incremental planning	housing, 15% Public rental housing, 9% Regular ownership Active, regulatory planning > contract planning
Active planning > flexible planning Urban development strategy: living-working areas	Urban development strategy: priority development sites	Urban development strategy: focus areas

Data collection (Table 2) took place within a broader research project (2017-2020). For this study, 74 semi-structured, exploratory interviews were conducted with academic experts and local informants from public and private sectors who had good knowledge of critical issues in the researched fields. The exploratory interviews captured intangible aspects of the studied phenomenon that could be identified neither in the scientific literature nor in policy documents. Discussing existing policy documents with the interviewees also helped understand their use. The literature review of housing and planning contexts and the examination of local urban development strategies were completed with content from the interview summaries, which were the object of thematic qualitative coding.

**Table 2: Data collected in the three cities - \* ideal-types of actors inspired from Brandsen et al. (2005)**

Amsterdam	Brussels	Stockholm
<i>Fieldwork period:</i> June 2017; January - March 2018	<i>Fieldwork period:</i> January 2017 - December 2019	<i>Fieldwork period:</i> November 2017; March - May 2019
<i>Documents:</i> Amsterdam structural vision, Amsterdam 2025 strategy, ...	<i>Documents:</i> Regional development plan, Regional land-use plan, ...	<i>Documents:</i> Stockholm city plan, Regional development plan, ...
<i>Exploratory interviews</i> (n=25, French): Interviewees AMS-I1-I25	<i>Exploratory interviews</i> (n=22, English): Interviewees BXL-I1-I22	<i>Exploratory interviews</i> (n=27, English): Interviewees STI-I1-I27
<i>Interviewees' breakdown by actor type*:</i>	<i>Interviewees' breakdown by actor type*:</i>	<i>Interviewees' breakdown by actor type*:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- State (municipality): AMS-I3-I8</li> <li>- Market: AMS-I11-I16</li> <li>- Third sector: AMS-I1-I2; I9</li> <li>- (Community: AMS-I10)</li> <li>- Academia: AMS-I17-I25</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- State (regional institutions mainly): BXL-I2-I12</li> <li>- Market: BXL-I13-I17</li> <li>- Third sector: BXL-I1</li> <li>- Academia: BXL-I18-I22</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- State (municipality, region, ...): STO-I4-I5; I9-I12</li> <li>- Market: STO-I13-I18</li> <li>- Third sector: STO-I1-I3; I6-I8</li> <li>- Academia: STO-I19-I27</li> </ul>

## **4 Local regimes and live-work mix strategies in Amsterdam, Brussels and Stockholm**

### **4.1 Amsterdam**

The roots of the Amsterdam housing regime correspond to the 1901 Housing Act, which institutionalised social housing (Halleux et al., 2012; Terhorst & Van de Ven, 1997) and the housing associations (HAs) formed during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Boelhouwer & Priemus, 2014). These non-profit organisations are responsible for social housing and own over 40% of the total housing stock (*Amsterdamse federatie van woningcorporaties* [AFWC], 2020). Social rental housing supply became substantial after WWII (e.g., Hochstenbach, 2016; Musterd, 2014) and remained state-subsidised until the 1989 Housing memorandum (Boelhouwer & Priemus, 2014), under which homeownership became the new priority (Savini et al., 2016; Van Gent & Hochstenbach, 2019). HAs started selling dwellings, first to individual households (1997 ‘Social Housing Sales Covenant’), then to private-sector actors (2011 housing memorandum and ‘Right-to-buy’ policy) (Hochstenbach, 2016; Savini et al., 2016). In 2012, following the European Commission advice, the national government forced HAs to focus primarily on low-income groups, whereas they previously accommodated various income groups (Boelhouwer & Priemus, 2014). The Housing Act was revised (2015) to restrict further HAs’ means and activities (Van Gent & Hochstenbach, 2019). The Dutch housing market was heavily impacted by the real estate crisis that followed the GFC (Boelhouwer, 2017), which led to regulatory reforms, including stricter mortgage conditions (Boelhouwer & Priemus, 2014). Another outcome was the expansion, flexibilisation and ‘regulated marketization’ of the PRS in Amsterdam (Hochstenbach & Ronald, 2020), which fuelled the housing crisis.

Housing provision has been closely related to spatial planning in the Netherlands. Amsterdam owns over 80% of the municipal land, leased-out through land-lease contracts (Savini et al., 2016). Municipal land-lease was formally introduced in 1896 to preserve certain functions and avoid urban sprawl (Halleux et al., 2012; Korthals Altes & Tambach, 2008; OECD, 2017). Amsterdam extended its borders until the 1960s through land-annexation plans and massive housing programmes (Healey, 2007). Essential instruments were formalised in the 1960s, including the land-use plan, which encourages desired land use with legal certainty (Buitelaar & Sorel, 2010). After the 1970s crisis, polycentric urban development principles, mixed-use and urban renewal goals were introduced in city plans (Healey, 2007), and the ‘compact city’ policy was enacted (Terhorst & Van de Ven, 1997). During the 1990s, large-scale urban regeneration programmes were launched under competitiveness policies, in close cooperation with market parties and HAs (Savini et al., 2016). Mixed-use developments expanded in the 2000s when new urban districts were planned from scratch and industrial areas were opened to housing and service-based activities (Korthals Altes & Tambach, 2008; Savini et al., 2016). After the GFC, planning was decentralised and reformed to shorten procedures, make them more flexible, and reduce risks for the market, so that land use increasingly relies on economic conditions and local governments have reduced steering capacity (Heurkens et al., 2018; OECD, 2017;

Remøy & Street, 2018; Savini, 2016; Van Gent, 2013). The endeavour to ‘modernise’ and ‘simplify’ land-use planning is also pursued in the future Environmental Act (Rijksoverheid, 2020).

Amsterdam 2040 structural vision promotes densification and mixed-use development in line with previous plans. Accordingly, the Amsterdam 2025 strategy designates ‘living-working’ milieus in former harbour, industrial and office areas, where it encourages specific economic activities (e.g., creative, innovative). This strategy received criticism for its excessive focus on housing and densification (Interviewees AMS-I5; I8; I11). Nevertheless, the more recent national initiative for housing supply aims to deliver one million housing units before 2030 (Aedes, 2021) to tackle the housing shortage and improve housing affordability for all. In Amsterdam, the so-called ‘policy 40/40/20’ (2017) requires a distribution of 40% social housing, 40% mid-rental housing and 20% free-market housing in new developments. However, the city has experienced renewed office demand, creating competition between housing and office functions in specific locations (Interviewee AMS-I14; I25).

## 4.2 Brussels

The Belgian liberal housing regime draws upon the historical promotion of homeownership, the emphasis on property rights and a dualist rental system, with a hardly regulated PRS and little social housing (7% on average in the BCR - *Institut Bruxellois de Statistique et d'Analyse* [IBSA], 2019). The first Housing Act (1889) already supported homeownership through tax exemptions, cheap credits and social loans (De Decker, 2008). After WWI, this institutional path was strengthened by establishing construction grants and two institutions responsible for allocating social loans. Despite the creation of a national agency responsible for social rental housing supply (1919), this tenure form remained marginal (De Decker, 1990, 2008). After WWII, the De Taeye Act (1948) facilitated mass homeownership by regulating the delivery of free grants and offering advantageous conditions for mortgages (*ibid*), following the ‘anti-urbanism’ path of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (De Decker, 2011b; Ryckewaert, 2013). During the 1950-1960s, homeownership expansion on cheap, peripheral land, car ownership democratisation and subsidised commuting permitted further suburbanisation, contributing to Brussels’ depopulation (Deboosere, 2010). After the creation of the BCR (1989), an urban revitalisation plan was issued to bring middle and high-income households back to the inner city (Uitermark & Loopmans, 2013; Van Criekingen, 2009). Also, the regional development company, responsible for economic expansion and urban revitalisation, started developing subsidised homeownership in mixed-use projects for middle classes in deprived neighbourhoods. Nowadays, homeownership and the PRS are the two principal tenure forms in the context of fast-increasing housing prices, which can be related to incentives to homeownership (e.g., low mortgage rates), the growth of a foreign class with a higher ability to pay and rising financialisation (Romainville, 2017).

Brussels’ spatial planning has suffered from government agencies’ conflicting policies, institutional complexity, and dependency on market interests (De Boeck et al., 2017; Groth & Corijn, 2005; Romańczyk, 2012). Upon 19<sup>th</sup>-century industrialisation, the bourgeoisie settled in the south-eastern parts of the city, whereas the working-class lived close to the western industry premises (Slegers et al., 2012). In this

fragmented context, electoral and fiscal reforms after WWI prevented Brussels agglomeration from expanding its boundaries (Terhorst & Van de Ven, 1997). During the 1930s crisis, unemployed workers were encouraged to leave cities for a rural house with a garden (De Decker, 1990, 2008; Ryckewaert, 2013). After WWII, Brussels actively developed infrastructure for the 1958 World exhibition and, later on, for the EU institutions (Ryckewaert, 2013). Internationalisation allowed reviving the deindustrialising economy and transform Brussels into a cosmopolitan place (*ibid*). The 1962 Spatial Planning Act introduced the main regulatory planning instruments, including a land-use plan based on the segregation of residential and economic uses (Halleux et al., 2012). In Brussels, planning regulations appeared to facilitate the demolition of old mixed-use blocks to develop monofunctional office districts (Romańczyk, 2012). This process happened under the expansion of European functions (van Meeteren et al., 2016) and a politicised planning practice (de Vries, 2015). The 1990s' urban revitalisation plans did not prevent Brussels from becoming highly segregated (Musterd et al., 1997). Today's mixed-use projects continue to support urban renewal, including on former industrial land (De Boeck & Ryckewaert, 2020).

Brussels' urban development strategy (2018) promotes integrated economic growth through densification and mixed-use development. It defines priority development sites, including the Stimulated Urban Economy Area, which encourages local employment. The city remains attractive for knowledge workers and promotes innovation through dedicated regional plans (Ananian, 2014). The regional development plan was influenced by the creation of a mixed land-use zone, the Enterprise Area for Urban Development, in the regional land-use plan to stimulate housing supply and economic growth in former industrial areas. In these plans, subsidised homeownership is still advocated before social housing development (Interviewees BXL-I6; I20).

### 4.3 Stockholm

The Swedish social-democratic housing regime builds upon five pillars: a universally oriented housing policy, a public rental sector, an integrated rental market, a corporatist system and a large cooperative sector (Bengtsson, 2013)<sup>2</sup>. In the 1920s, the tenants' union and the first cooperative were formed. Tenant ownership was institutionalised in 1929 (*ibid*). This specific tenure form gives the residents the right to use a cooperative share and live in a membership-owned housing association (Sørvoll & Bengtsson, 2018). The first Social-Democratic government (1933) started developing a housing model based on the peoples' home ideology (*Folkhemmet* - Grundström & Molina, 2016) and created the Municipal Housing Companies (MHCs). In the 1940s, rent regulation and tenure security were developed and, after WWII and the Housing Provision Act (1947), the MHCs started providing 'housing for all' (Caldenby, 2019).

In the 1960s, the Million Homes Programme (MHP) was launched to address the housing shortage (Gullberg & Kaijser, 2004). The MHP aimed at building one million dwellings between 1965 and 1974 and was translated into state support to large-scale, standardised multi-family housing (*ibid*). This functionalist

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<sup>2</sup> In Lundström, M. J., Fredriksson, C., & Witzell, J. (2013). *Planning and sustainable urban development in Sweden*. Swedish Society for Town & Country Planning.

housing model effectively increased affordable housing supply yet enhanced segregation in the 1970s (Grundström & Molina, 2016). The 1990s economic and political crisis constituted a radical change in housing provision. The conservative government abolished state loans and housing subsidies and favoured market-based housing policies (Grundström & Molina, 2016; Bengtsson, 2013). When the Social Democrats came back into power (1994), they enacted a ‘right-to-buy’ policy that led to the decline of public rental housing in inner Stockholm (Andersson & Turner, 2014). Housing commodification continued in the 2010s when the national government requested MHCs to act like the market (Bengtsson, 2013), so their choices are now based on ‘what the market would do’ (Interviewee STO-I4; I12; I16). Today, Sweden, and particularly Stockholm, face an unprecedented housing crisis. In Stockholm, tenant ownership has become the dominant tenure form but is hardly affordable, whereas public rental housing is barely accessible due to long queuing times, strict tenure regulations and a complex rent setting system (Lind, 2017; Wilhelmsson et al., 2011).

Stockholm’s planning regime is marked by ‘active’ land acquisitions, which started in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and enabled the city to expand its territory and practice leaseholds (Gullberg & Kaijser, 2004). The municipal planning monopoly (1907), which gives control to municipalities over land use (Lundström et al., 2013), empowered cities in front of landowners during the inter-war period. The New Building Act (1947) then allowed municipalities to develop land through master planning (Blücher, 2013)<sup>3</sup>. Stockholm’s planning-led urban growth continued through major housing construction programmes, using leasehold and land acquisition loans (Zakhour & Metzger, 2018). The main planning instruments (the city plan, the detailed development plan) were introduced in the 1980s. However, since the 1990s, urban plans have become the results of prior land negotiations with private developers (Zakhour & Metzger, 2018), which are seen as untransparent (Caesar, 2016). Nevertheless, the legally-binding detailed development plan still determines the functions and density allowed in new developments.

Urban development strategies are formalised at both municipal and regional levels. At the regional level, the Stockholm Region 2050 development plan aims to develop specific economic sectors (research and innovation, ICT) and have over half of the region employees working in knowledge-intensive sectors (Region Stockholm, 2018). It uses polycentric urban development principles and defines urban cores, where municipalities must develop housing. At the municipal level, the Stockholm city plan (2018) supports urban growth through densification. It defines housing supply goals – explicitly justified for their role in economic growth – and focus areas in which to concentrate the provision of housing, amenities, services and workplaces (City of Stockholm, 2018). Land-use policy is used to implement the plan, and collaboration with property owners is encouraged on private land. Tenant ownership is still heavily supported, and standardised housing solutions are developed (Interviewee STO-I8; I19) given the absence of consensus on a social housing policy (Interviewees STO-I1; I4; I8; I-22).

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<sup>3</sup> In *ibid.*

## **5 Path dependencies and ontologies of live-work mix**

This section compares the three cities' institutional paths to identify the main path dependencies (live-work mix roots and enablers) and understand current actors' dependencies and instruments' underpinning discourses. These elements frame ontologies of live-work mix and help understand broader city visions. Based on the four arguments exposed hereafter, we summarise the ontologies identified as follows:

- Amsterdam's ontology draws on the instrumentation of the concept to foster attractiveness;
- Brussels' ontologies do overlap between innovation and production to overcome the varying levels of attractiveness within the city;
- Stockholm's ontologies attempt to balance the housing-for-all heritage with the economic competitiveness agenda.

### **5.1 The instruments setting live-work goals draw on divergent discourses but equally use housing development as a tool of economic growth**

Analysis of the three cities' urban development strategies shows that live-work mix acts as a densification tool, with residential and economic attractiveness supporting each other. The critical role of housing development is similar in Amsterdam's 'living-working' areas, Brussels' priority sites and Stockholm's focus areas. However, each city emphasises specific economic sectors (productive v. knowledge-based), illustrating divergent discourses that affect future visions of live-work mix.

Amsterdam and Stockholm primarily focus on knowledge-intensive sectors. Both cities have integrated economic development into spatial planning for a long time. Amsterdam strategy relies on a creative-city discourse (Interviewee AMS-I7). The city is perceived as 'popular', 'attractive' (Interviewee AMS-I2; I3; I4; I16; I19) and the country's 'economic engine' (Interviewee AMS-I4). In this vision – adopted despite academic criticism regarding unwanted outcomes such as social polarisation (e.g., Bontje & Musterd, 2009) – housing development is instrumental to economic growth, particularly in mixed-use areas (Korthals Altes & Tambach, 2008). Such a role is striking in Stockholm, where both actors and plans see the housing shortage as a barrier to economic growth (Interviewee STO-I12; I18; I19) and a threat to the city competitiveness (competitive-city discourse).

Conversely, Brussels' regional authorities use a productive-city discourse, in line with the city renewed attention for urban production since the GFC (De Boeck & Ryckewaert, 2020). The early-industrialised city suffered from deindustrialisation upon the arrival of EU institutions, which created local employment issues. However, because of derogations from land-use prescriptions during the planning process (Interviewee BXL-I4; I22), housing is primarily developed in mixed-use zones at the expense of productive activities.

## **5.2 Local roots to live-work mix rely on early planning directions to either city expansion or suburbanisation beyond city limits**

Examining early planning directions allows understanding the live-work mix roots and the aforementioned discourses. The planning directions taken in each city in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century remained for several decades and generated increasing returns. Contingent occurrences in Amsterdam (e.g., municipal land-lease, HAs' institutionalisation) and Stockholm (e.g., creating the tenants' union and cooperative housing) encouraged active city expansion through the extension of municipal boundaries. Both cities experienced similar turning points after WWII: they pursued urban growth through land acquisition and massive housing programmes ('new towns' in Amsterdam, 'ABC suburbs' and MHP in Stockholm). However, the planning system was centralised in the Netherlands, whereas the municipal planning monopoly already existed in Sweden. Anyhow, these developments determined post-war live-work mix and are still influential. For example, Stockholm's post-war ABC suburbs combined housing, workplaces and amenities centred around underground infrastructure (Andersson & Bråmå, 2018), similarly to today's 'urban cores'. The later MHP fostered the development of standardised and prefabricated large-scale housing estates (Grundström & Molina, 2016; Hall & Vidén, 2005; Bengtsson in Lundström et al., 2013), which continue to inspire current affordable housing solutions.

Conversely, suburbanisation out of Brussels' territory, bounded to its borders, was observed from the start of the studied period. The Catholic party's policies aiming to fix the working class in the countryside (through railway infrastructure and subsidies) were essential in that process (De Decker, 2008). The institutions and instruments created after WWI, which particularly hit Belgium and Brussels, consolidated the suburbanisation path. Besides, spatial planning occurred in a legal void until 1962 because Brussels – and Belgium – could not agree on a spatial planning policy (De Decker, 2008). Nevertheless, an implicit, collective urbanisation endeavour was observed (de Vries, 2015; Ryckewaert, 2013). Still, the absence of a planning framework, combined with the liberal land acquisition system and little social housing, led to the generalised urbanisation of the country (Deboosere, 2010). Hence, Brussels' economic growth fuelled suburbanisation, land scarcity and population decline (*ibid*). It is only since the 1990s' revitalisation programmes that mixed-use has been formally introduced in new developments and, later on, in land-use and development plans.

## **5.3 The types of actors implementing live-work goals illustrate increasing market dependency despite other influential sectors in housing provision**

The actors of live-work mix and their interdependencies result from the evolution of housing provision in each city, with long-standing market dependency in Brussels. However, market interests are increasingly influential in Amsterdam and Stockholm too. In Brussels, the regional development company has had an entrepreneurial role in live-work development, which illustrates the public sector's growing capacity to intervene actively in planning. Nevertheless, this actor systematically works with private developers and

investors in public-private partnerships (PPP), consistently with private companies' dominant role in new housing production (Romainville, 2017).

Partnerships are also increasingly observed in Amsterdam, where housing production is shared between market parties and HAs. Both types of actors collaborate on live-work projects, especially since 2015, as HAs are no longer allowed to develop mixed tenures or commercial activities (Nieboer & Gruis, 2016). These third-sector organisations remain an essential actor of live-work development, consistently with their historical role in housing provision and the city expansion. Conversely, in Stockholm, cooperatives and MHCs must behave similarly to private developers. The latter now prevail in housing provision (Interviewee STO-I4; I12; I16), whereas the former saw their power and influence reduced. PPP seem to be less common than in the other cities, possibly due to the high level of institutionalisation of housing suppliers (and the construction industry), as a direct consequence of the MHP. In both cities, these changes result from market shifts in housing provision.

#### **5.4 The critical junctures enabling live-work mix either paved the way for flexibilisation and commodification or strengthened institutional governance capacity**

Amsterdam and Stockholm share a market shift from social-democratic housing provision – with local variations – to flexibilisation and commodification. This shift reduced the cities' governance capacity despite initially actively planned and regulated regimes and enabled commodified forms of live-work mix. Amsterdam's institutional path seems to have reacted sooner to external changes and in several steps. Firstly, after the 1970s economic crisis, mixed-use development was introduced in urban renewal policies (Healey, 2007), and economic growth objectives were integrated into urban developments (Taşan-Kok et al., 2020). Secondly, the 1989 housing memorandum was followed by social housing sales, homeownership promotion, and HAs' financial independence in the 1990s (Boterman & Van Gent, 2014). The sales were often part of mixed-use urban regeneration projects aimed at accommodating higher income groups in disadvantaged areas (Van Gent & Hochstenbach, 2019). Thirdly, planning decentralisation and flexibilisation after the GFC affected the Dutch municipalities' steering capacity (Heurkens et al., 2018).

In Stockholm, the market shift occurred after the 1990s economic crisis, following decades of reproduction. It was translated into moves to contract planning and market-based housing provision (tenant-ownership prioritisation in the 2000s, MHCs business-oriented in the 2010s). In particular, tenant ownership supply created short-term financial gains for the municipality after it decided to sell land plots allocated for tenant-owned housing and maintain leasehold only for rental housing (Zakhour & Metzger, 2018). However, those sales reduced public land ownership and further control over land use. Simultaneously, Stockholm best illustrates the concept of lock-in effect, given its difficulties in adapting its universal housing-provision institutional framework to the current housing crisis. In the absence of social housing, standardised affordable housing developments reflect the continuation of mass consumption under housing commodification.

In Brussels, there was not such a shift because market involvement in housing production was always substantial, in the absence of de-politicised planning and strong institutional capacity (De Boeck et al., 2017). However, spatial planning regionalisation and the creation of the BCR (1989) led to establishing new institutions (e.g., the regional development company) and instruments (subsidised homeownership, the regional land-use and development plans) that contributed to improving urban governance and played central roles in mixed-use development. Although this institutional change somehow took the opposite direction compared to the other cities, it appeared to enable live-work mix. In sum, despite a similar inclination to market interests, the cities' governance capacities take different directions, directly affecting the implementation of live-work goals (e.g., Uyttebrouck et al., 2021).

## 6 Conclusion

This paper examined the impact of local institutional frameworks on ontologies of live-work mix, or the interconnection of residential and economic uses in urban developments at various scales. Although live-work mix is not a new concept, it has raised renewed interest under labour markets' flexibilisation. Live-work mix is directly related to changes in housing provision and urban agendas integrating the new economy. Using an institutionalist approach to governance drawing on path dependency, we compared Amsterdam, Brussels and Stockholm's institutional frameworks. After introducing each city regimes and live-work mix strategies, we identified the related ontologies, which are consistently oriented towards attractiveness (Amsterdam) or, on the contrary, overlapping between, sometimes, antagonistic agendas (Brussels, Stockholm). This picture may look oversimplistic given the likely competition between several ontologies in each city, relating to divergent city visions and practices that reveal *multiple* realities (Law, 2004). Still, the identified ontologies reflect, to a certain extent, the nature of the live-work mix envisioned by the actors and institutions of housing provision and urban development, and help understand current planning discourses and city ontologies.

To explain the relationships underpinning these observations, we structured the discussion in four arguments. Firstly, the instrumental role of housing supply in economic growth, characteristic of live-work mix, is more or less explicitly defined in strategic instruments. What differs, however, is the discourse behind these strategies (creative, productive, competitive city) and the economic sectors emphasised (knowledge-intensive, productive), which can be related to past (de-)industrialisation patterns and their influence on city development. Beyond path dependency, the way present discourses affect future visions of live-work mix reveals 'goal dependency' (Van Assche et al., 2015). Secondly, early planning directions generated increasing returns that directly influenced post-war live-work mix, depending on tendencies to city expansion or suburbanisation beyond city limits. Thirdly, market involvement in the implementation of live-work goals is explained by shifts in housing provision and planning (Amsterdam, Stockholm) or historical predominance (Brussels). Nevertheless, other sectors remaining influential in housing provision nuance this observation, illustrating long-standing institutional 'interdependencies' (*ibid*). Fourthly, each city experienced critical junctures, which either enhanced flexibilisation and commodification (Amsterdam,

Stockholm) or strengthened governance capacity (Brussels), yet in both cases enabled live-work mix. All in all, the strongest path dependencies were observed in Brussels (homeownership, suburbanisation) and Stockholm (housing for all, urban growth), the latter city experiencing at the same time significant lock-effects and radical reactions after decades of reproduction.

Based on the above, institutionalist governance analysis drawing on dependencies, in particular path dependency, appears to be useful to understand the construction of institutional paths and connect them to current differences in housing and urban developments, and related city – or here, live-work mix – ontologies. This approach also allows appreciating divergences in local contexts that seemed convergent at first sight, making it highly relevant for comparative case studies. Nevertheless, the deterministic nature of this approach reaches limits, for example, on the question of governance capacities, which confirms the risk of overemphasising stability (Kay, 2005). A certain level of autonomy in current urban agendas should not be downplayed. In response to these issues, we argue that established institutions mediate undoubtedly the local transferability of global developments, consistently with ideas developed in evolutionary governance theory (e.g., Van Assche et al., 2015). We thus plead for *nuanced* analysis of the dependencies observed in governance paths to understand why and how similar global developments are mitigated locally. As discussed in this paper, live-work goals show substantial similarities despite distinctive institutional paths but are translated differently, making ontologies of live-work mix both different and similar. These results incline us to encourage further research using this analytical framework to understand urban developments better.

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