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Comparing Social Housing Policies and Practices in the Netherlands and Italy: Lessons for Improved Management of Built Environment

TESI DI LAUREA MAGISTRALE IN
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Abstract

In recent years, social housing has become an increasingly important subject in Europe due to the rising need for affordable housing. Despite numerous efforts, many countries still face significant challenges in meeting this demand, particularly in terms of quality and sustainability. This study aims to identify potential solutions for the social housing problems by analysing the social housing system in the Netherlands, which is widely regarded as a successful model.

This analysis is based on a review of relevant literature and data from official sources, which results in revealing key differences between the Dutch and Italian social housing systems, particularly in terms of financing, governance, and tenant participation.

The study concludes that the Dutch social housing system provides a valuable benchmark for other European countries, including Italy, to learn from and potentially implement. By adopting some of the key features of the Dutch system, such as a strong public-private partnership, innovative financing mechanisms, and active tenant participation, Italy can improve the quality and sustainability of its social housing stock and better meet the needs of its citizens.

Key-words: Social Housing, Comparative Analysis, Netherlands, Italy, Public-Private Partnership, Financing, Governance, Tenant Participation.

Abstract in lingua italiana

Negli ultimi anni, l'edilizia sociale è diventata un argomento sempre più importante in Europa a causa dell'aumento della necessità di alloggi accessibili. Nonostante numerosi sforzi, molti paesi si trovano ancora di fronte a significative sfide nel soddisfare questa domanda, in particolare in termini di qualità e sostenibilità. Lo scopo di questo studio è individuare possibili soluzioni per i problemi dell'edilizia sociale, analizzando il sistema dell'edilizia sociale nei Paesi Bassi, ampiamente considerato un modello di successo.

Questa analisi si basa sulla revisione della letteratura rilevante e sui dati provenienti da fonti ufficiali, il che porta a rivelare differenze chiave tra i sistemi di edilizia sociale olandesi e italiani, in particolare per quanto riguarda il finanziamento, la governance e la partecipazione degli inquilini.

Lo studio conclude che il sistema di edilizia sociale olandese offre un prezioso punto di riferimento per altri paesi europei, compresa l'Italia, da cui imparare e potenzialmente implementare. Adottando alcune delle caratteristiche chiave del sistema olandese, come una forte partnership pubblico-privata, meccanismi di finanziamento innovativi e una partecipazione attiva degli inquilini, l'Italia può migliorare la qualità e la sostenibilità del suo parco edilizio per l'edilizia sociale e meglio soddisfare le esigenze dei suoi cittadini.

Parole chiave: Edilizia Sociale, Analisi Comparativa, Paesi Bassi, Italia, Partnership Pubblico-Privata, Finanziamento, Governance, Partecipazione degli Inquilini.

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Introduction

Scientific research plays a crucial role in advancing knowledge and understanding, particularly in the built environment. As a part of Built Environment social housing stands as a critical element in addressing housing challenges faced by a significant portion of the population. This thesis aims to contribute to the existing body of literature by conducting a comparative analysis of social housing policies and practices in the Netherlands and Italy, with the objective of identifying valuable lessons that can improve the management of the built environment.

Social housing stands as an essential element within housing strategies designed to confront the housing difficulties encountered by individuals with limited financial means. It constitutes a type of rental housing that is under the ownership and management of either governmental bodies or nonprofit entities, with its primary objective being the provision of economical housing solutions to individuals in disadvantaged circumstances. This encompasses people who have faced homelessness, situations of domestic violence, or possess distinct and specific requirements. Social housing encompasses both public housing, which is under the direct administration of the government, and community housing, which is supervised by non-governmental organizations.

Social housing plays a pivotal role in societies around the world. One of the primary benefits of social housing is its ability to alleviate the burden of housing costs for low-income individuals and families. It is an essential component of any well-functioning housing sector and is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it helps address the fundamental human right to shelter, ensuring that every individual has access to safe and secure housing. Secondly, social housing serves as a means to mitigate economic inequality, as it provides affordable housing options to those who might otherwise struggle to afford a decent home. Moreover, it contributes to the stability of

communities, fostering social cohesion and reducing crime rates. In essence, social housing is not just about providing homes; it is about building a stronger, more equitable, and healthier society.

The housing sector in Italy faces a multitude of pressing challenges. One of the most prominent issues is the increasing unaffordability of housing, particularly in urban areas like Milan. Housing prices have surged beyond the reach of many citizens, leading to a growing number of people struggling to secure suitable living arrangements. Additionally, accessibility remains a significant concern, with certain demographic groups finding it increasingly difficult to access housing that meets their specific needs, such as the elderly and people with disabilities. Furthermore, sustainability is a looming challenge, as Italy, like the rest of the world, grapples with the imperative to reduce its carbon footprint. The need for sustainable, energy-efficient housing has never been more critical.

Addressing these housing challenges is not only a moral obligation but also a pragmatic necessity. Failure to provide affordable, accessible, and sustainable housing options can result in adverse societal consequences. It can perpetuate cycles of poverty, exacerbate income inequality, and lead to homelessness and social instability. Moreover, an unsustainable housing sector can harm the environment, contributing to climate change and environmental degradation. Tackling these challenges is essential for the well-being of our citizens, the prosperity of our communities, and the sustainability of our planet. By addressing these issues, we aim to create a future where everyone has a place to call home, where communities thrive, and where our environment is preserved for generations to come.

The motivation behind this research stems from the dire need to address housing challenges in Italy and explore successful models and practices from other countries. Italy faces significant issues, including affordability, accessibility, and sustainability in its housing sector, necessitating an exploration of innovative approaches and strategies implemented elsewhere. By comparing the social housing systems in the

Netherlands and Italy, this thesis fills the knowledge gap and identify key lessons that can inform and enhance the management of the built environment in Italy.



Figure 1 Students from Politecnico di Milano protested in Milan against high rents, Piazza Leonardo da Vinci, Politecnico di Milano, 14 May 2023

This study has three primary objectives: Analyse and compare the social housing policies and practices in the Netherlands and Italy. Identify the key differences and similarities between the two systems. Propose policy recommendations and lessons learned from the Netherlands to improve the management of the built environment in Italy.

To achieve these objectives, the following research questions will guide the investigation:

1. What are the fundamental disparities and commonalities in social housing policies and practices between the Netherlands and Italy?

2. How can successful elements of the Dutch social housing system be adapted to address the housing challenges in Italy?
3. What policy recommendations can be formulated to enhance the management of the built environment in Italy based on the lessons learned from the Netherlands?

This research holds significant importance as it aims to contribute to the development of improved social housing policies and practices in Italy. By examining the successful elements of the Dutch system, known for its effectiveness and efficiency, this study seeks to identify strategies and interventions that can address the housing challenges in Italy. The findings and recommendations derived from this research have the potential to positively impact the accessibility, affordability, and sustainability of social housing in Italy, thereby improving the living conditions and overall well-being of its citizens. This is crucial, as it addresses issues of social equity, economic stability, community well-being, homelessness prevention, environmental sustainability, and the health of our citizens

To address the research objectives and questions, a comprehensive methodology will be employed. This methodology includes a detailed literature review of social housing policies and practices in both countries, expert interviews with professionals in the field, and in-depth case studies of specific social housing projects. Through a comparative analysis, this study will identify the strengths and weaknesses of the social housing systems in the Netherlands and Italy, facilitating the transfer of knowledge and best practices.

This thesis is organized into several chapters, each contributing to a comprehensive exploration of the research topic. The structure of the thesis is as follows:

1. **Introduction** (Chapter 1)

- This chapter introduces the research topic, providing insights into the motivation, research objectives, and questions that guide this study. It emphasizes the significance and potential impact of the research.

2. **Literature Review** (Chapter 2)

- Chapter 2 offers a detailed literature review, delving into the social housing policies and practices in the Netherlands and Italy. It thoroughly examines the key characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses of these systems.

3. **Data and Methodology** (Chapter 3)

- Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology employed in this study. It describes the data collection process, including expert interviews and case study analysis, providing transparency into the research approach.

4. **Analysis and Results** (Chapter 4)

- In Chapter 4, the comparative analysis unfolds, revealing the lessons derived from the Dutch social housing system. These lessons are evaluated for their potential applicability within the context of Italy.

5. **Conclusion and Policy Recommendations** (Chapter 5)

- Chapter 5 marks the conclusion of the study. It synthesizes the findings and discusses their implications. Additionally, this chapter offers policy recommendations aimed at enhancing the management of the built environment in Italy, drawing on the insights gained from the Dutch experience.

This structured approach ensures a systematic examination of the research topic, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of social housing policies and practices in both countries and paving the way for valuable recommendations for Italy's built environment management.

Literature Review

The literature review provides a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of social housing, examining its concepts, theories, historical development, and interdisciplinary perspectives. The review aims to offer a thorough understanding of social housing within the context of the built environment, addressing housing challenges and promoting sustainable, inclusive communities.

The review begins by defining social housing and highlighting its significance in tackling housing issues. It explores the multifaceted role of social housing in shaping the built environment, encompassing social, economic, and environmental dimensions. The historical evolution of social housing is traced, providing insights into its origins, development, and transformative milestones.

Theoretical frameworks related to social housing are explored, emphasizing key concepts such as affordability, accessibility, social mix, and sustainability. These concepts form the foundation for understanding and analyzing social housing policies and practices. Various theoretical perspectives from social sciences, economics, real estate, civil engineering, and other disciplines are synthesized to provide a holistic view of social housing.

The concept of social mix within social housing is explored in-depth. The definition and origins of social mix are outlined, and its theoretical underpinnings are discussed. The benefits and challenges of promoting social mix in social housing projects are examined, along with case studies of countries or projects that have implemented social mix strategies. The outcomes and transformative potential of social mix initiatives are evaluated.

Furthermore, a comprehensive historical review of research studies on social housing is presented. A comprehensive list of relevant research studies from various disciplines is compiled, showcasing the diverse range of scholarship on social

housing. Each study is summarized, highlighting its main objectives, methodologies, and significant findings.

The Main Concepts of Social Housing in the Built Environment:

Social housing is a critical component of housing policies and initiatives aimed at addressing the housing challenges faced by individuals with low incomes. It is a form of rental accommodation that is owned and operated by either government entities or non-profit organizations, with the primary goal of providing affordable housing options to those in need [1] This includes individuals who have experienced homelessness, family violence, or have specific special needs. Social housing encompasses both public housing, which is directly managed by the government, and community housing, which is overseen by non-government organizations [2]

The importance of social housing in tackling housing challenges is undeniable In OECD¹and non-OECD EU countries, social housing comprises a substantial portion of the housing stock, accounting for over 28 million dwellings, which represents approximately 6% of the total housing inventory. However, it is important to recognize that the definition, size, scope, target population, and type of provider of social housing may vary significantly across different countries [1]

¹ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

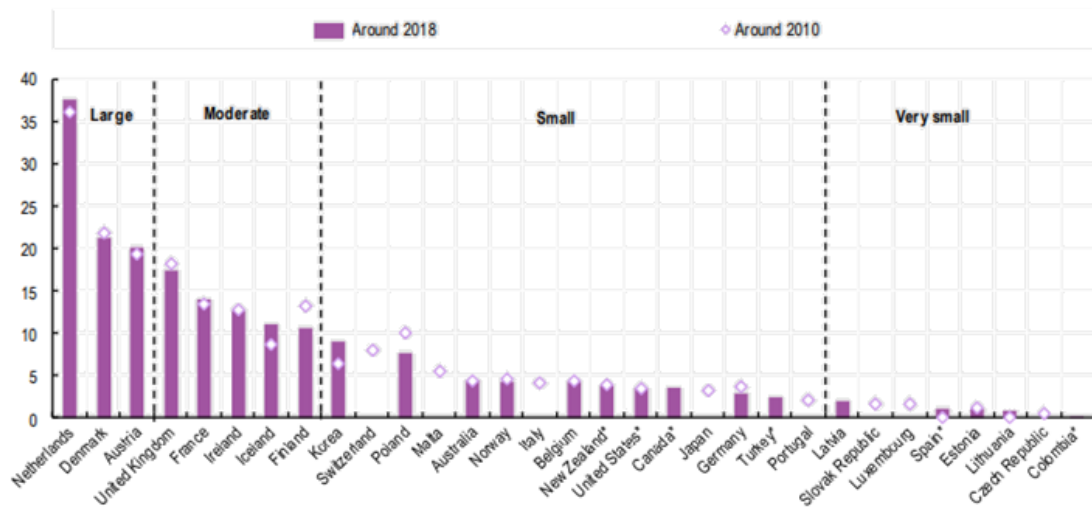


Figure 2 Social rental dwellings, percent of the total housing stock in selected years (2010, 2018)- OECD (2020)

One of the primary benefits of social housing is its ability to alleviate the burden of housing costs for low-income individuals and families [3]. In a world where affordable housing is increasingly scarce, social housing plays a vital role in ensuring that vulnerable populations have access to secure and stable housing options [4]. By providing affordable rental accommodations, social housing helps individuals and families who are struggling financially to secure a decent place to live [3]. This, in turn, reduces financial stress and improves the overall well-being of individuals, allowing

them to allocate their resources towards other essential needs such as healthcare, education, and food [5]

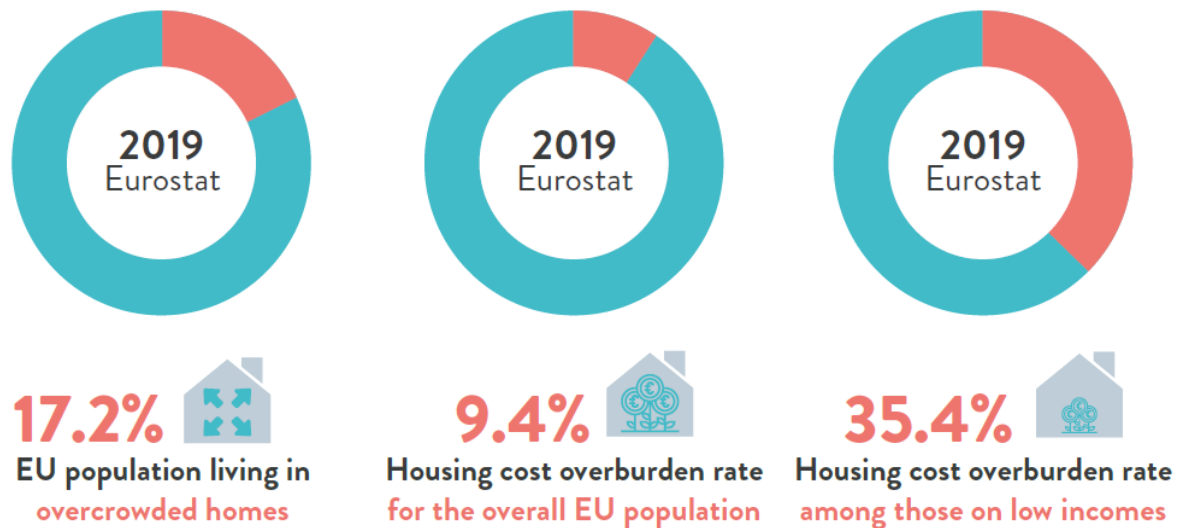


Figure 3 Tenants are almost 4 times as likely than home-owners to suffer from housing cost overburden (Eurostat (2019))

Moreover, social housing plays a crucial role in promoting social mixing within communities. It aims to create diverse neighborhoods where individuals from different socio-economic backgrounds can coexist, fostering social cohesion and integration. The objective is to break down the barriers that often segregate people based on income levels and provide an inclusive living environment that encourages interaction and mutual support [1].

However, it is important to acknowledge that the social housing sector faces challenges in achieving social mixing. Due to factors such as the concentration of lower-income and vulnerable tenants, there can be limitations in achieving a diverse cross-section of income levels within social housing developments [1]. This can potentially undermine the economic sustainability of the sector [6] and contribute to the spatial concentration of poverty and disadvantage [1].

In addition to its social impact, social housing also has implications for the broader built environment in terms of its economic and environmental aspects. Economically, social housing contributes to the sustainability of the built environment by providing

affordable housing options for low and middle-income earners [7]. By ensuring that housing costs remain affordable, social housing initiatives play a role in reducing income inequality and promoting social and economic equity within communities [1]. Furthermore, social housing projects can stimulate economic planning, generate employment opportunities within the housing sector, and promote the use of appropriate construction technologies that align with sustainability principles [8].

From an environmental standpoint, social housing can contribute to the sustainability of the built environment by promoting environmental protection and the use of environmentally friendly materials and practices [9]. Through effective land use planning and appropriate design practices, social housing projects can minimize their environmental impact and support the transition towards greener and more sustainable built environments [10]. This includes considerations such as energy efficiency, water conservation, waste management, and the use of renewable resources. By incorporating sustainable design principles, social housing initiatives can reduce the carbon footprint associated with housing construction and operation, thus contributing to broader environmental objectives [9].

However, it is essential to acknowledge that the implementation and success of social housing initiatives are not without challenges. The challenges of implementing and maintaining social housing initiatives are indeed multifaceted, encompassing various aspects that need to be carefully addressed:

Funding Constraints and Political Dynamics: One of the primary hurdles is funding constraints, which can hinder the expansion and sustainability of social housing programs. The social housing sector often grapples with the need for adequate funding to support decarbonization efforts and meet the increasing demand for affordable housing [11]. Additionally, the impact of budgetary and policy changes can create uncertainty, making it crucial to assess the impact of income funding gaps and navigate through political dynamics. [12]

Competing Priorities: Social housing providers face substantial financial pressures due to factors like high inflation, rising operating costs, and increased tenant living expenses. These financial challenges coincide with proposed rent caps and a fluctuating housing market, making it essential to find a delicate balance between meeting the needs of tenants and ensuring the financial sustainability of social housing programs. [13]

As an example, in Italy, the stringent timelines associated with ongoing funding programs, such as the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), are leading to a pervasive urgency in executing renovation projects. This urgency is, in turn, driving up construction costs. In the Netherlands, the cost of construction materials is experiencing a significant and rapid annual rise, nearing 25%. An inquiry conducted by Building Holland has pinpointed six specific products as the culprits behind this surge, with certain companies stockpiling these materials, thereby creating market distortions. In response to this situation, the Dutch Federation of Housing Corporations (AEDES) issued a press statement urging the Dutch government to take measures that would enable easier access to the market for prefabricated homes. [14]

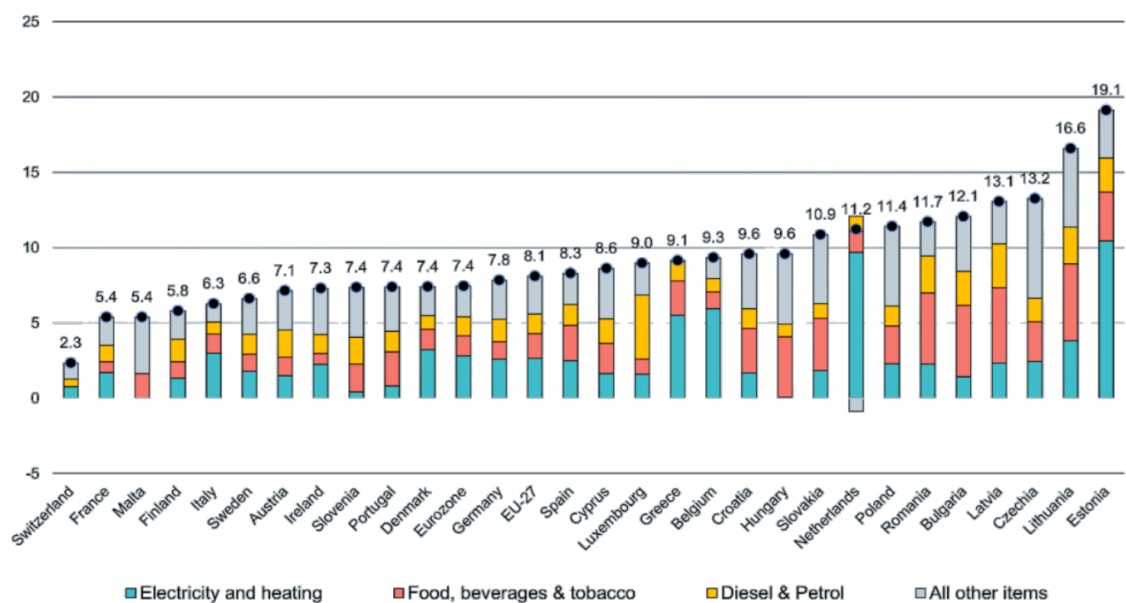


Figure 4 Current drivers of inflation in Europe, Percentage point Contributions (Eurostat (2022))

Management and Maintenance: Effective management and maintenance are key to the long-term success of social housing properties. Providers must invest significantly in existing homes to maintain quality, ensure building safety, and fulfill decarbonization commitments. This requires robust data on stock condition, a clear understanding of evolving policies, and active engagement with tenants to address their needs and concerns. [13]

Spatial Distribution and Location: Achieving social mixing and inclusive communities is a fundamental goal of social housing initiatives. However, challenges arise when there is an increasing concentration of lower-income and vulnerable tenants within specific areas. Careful planning of the spatial distribution and location of social housing developments is necessary to prevent the perpetuation of poverty concentration and promote diverse and inclusive neighborhoods. [1]

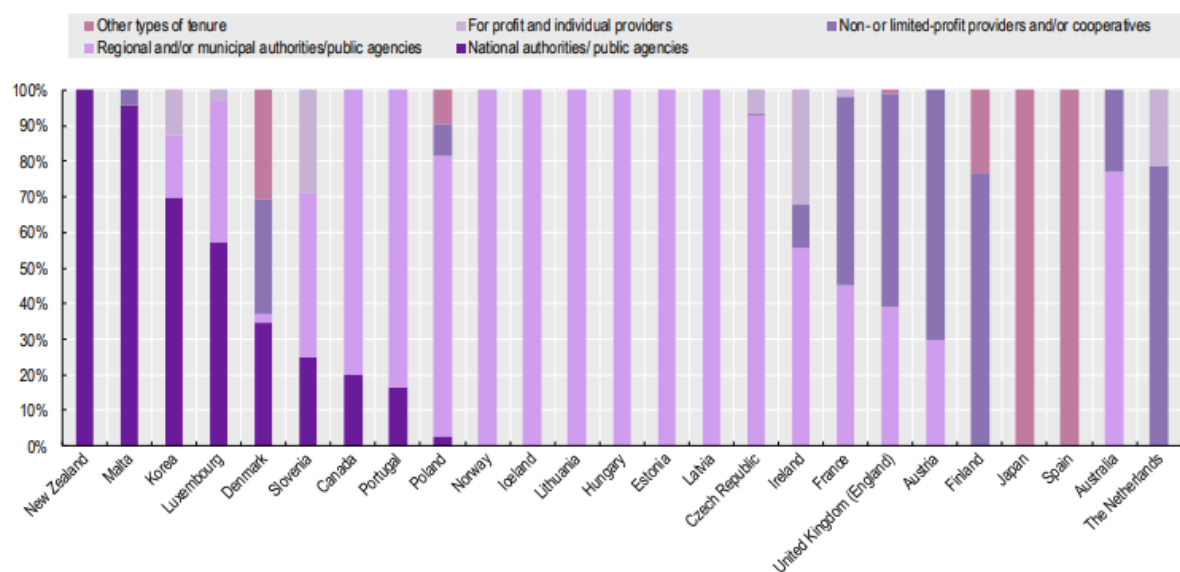


Figure 5 Share of total social rental housing stock by type of provider, 2018 or latest year available- OECD (2020)

Types and Theories of Social Housing Programs

Social housing encompasses various types and models designed to address housing needs and challenges within communities. This chapter aims to explore and explain different types of social housing, shedding light on their characteristics, management structures, and targeted populations. By understanding these diverse approaches,

researchers and policymakers can gain insights into the complexities of housing provision and develop effective strategies to address housing inequalities and affordability issues.

Types of Social Housing

Social housing, a critical component of housing policy and urban planning, encompasses various types and models designed to address housing needs and challenges within communities. This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive exploration of the different types of social housing while shedding light on the various theories and models proposed to explain social housing. Understanding the nuances of these housing initiatives is crucial for researchers, policymakers, and those interested in addressing housing inequalities and affordability issues in diverse societies. [15]

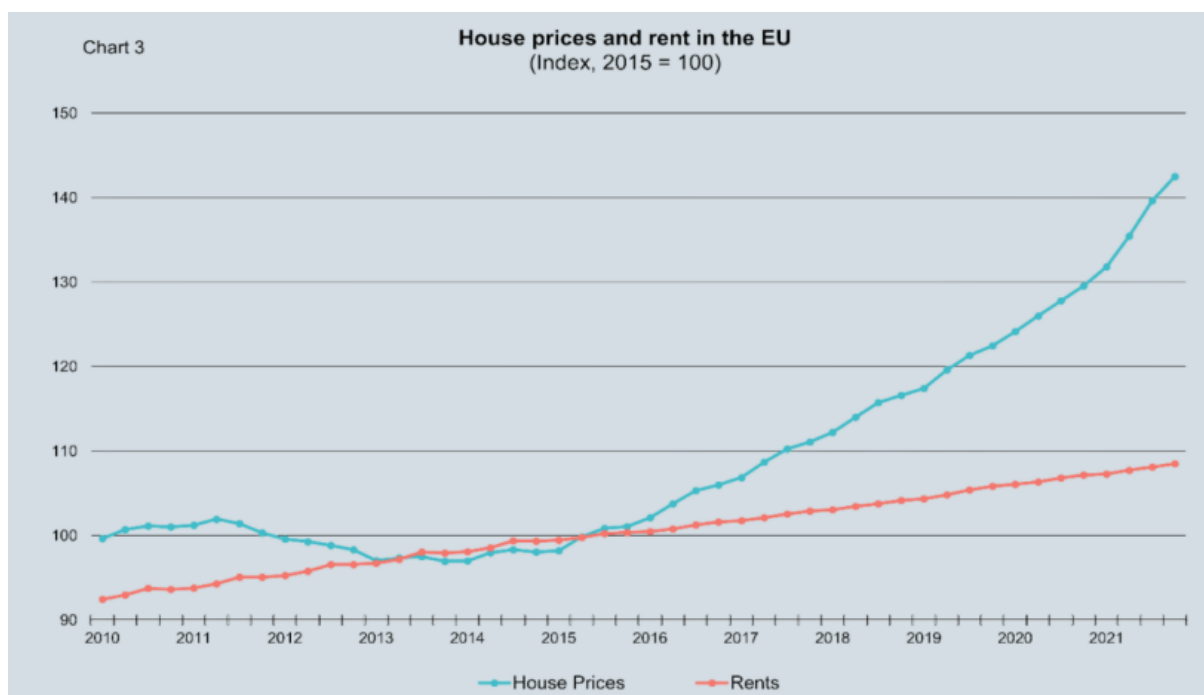


Figure 6 House Precises and Rent in the EU Eurostat (2022)

1- Public Housing:

This is a form of housing tenure in which the property is usually owned by a government authority, either central or local. Public housing is a key part of the social

safety net, providing affordable, secure housing to those in need and helping to alleviate affordability issues. It's typically offered at reduced rates and prioritizes individuals and families facing financial difficulties or housing insecurity. [15]

Public Housing	
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social housing reads to affordable rents • Can help to reduce poverty • Can help to mitigate homelessness • Especially helpful for people with low income • Beneficial for people who struggle to find a place to live • Can help pensioners to avoid old age poverty • Public housing supports the poorest among us • People have more money for other things • Especially important in metropolitan areas with high rents • Social housing can be beneficial for certain industries • May attract qualified workers • May reduce Prices and average tents • Public housing may become increasingly in the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Housing can be socially expensive • May lead to social isolation • May lead to exclusion of the minorities • Public housing may be considered as dodgy • Money may be missing for other important projects • Social housing may be misused • Living in public housing may be unsafe • Public Housing is often not maintained properly • May mostly benefit cooperations instead of the general public • Affordable housing may lead to deprived areas • It can be hard to get into social housing programs • Government should make sure that more houses are built instead

Table 1 "25 Major Pros & Cons of Public Housing, (environmental-conscience.com/public-housing-pros-cons/)

2- Community Housing:

This type of social housing is often owned and managed by not-for-profit organizations. It provides low-cost housing to individuals and families with low income. Community housing can include a variety of tenancy arrangements, such as rental housing, cooperative housing, and shared equity models. These initiatives aim to foster community spirit and often involve residents in management and decision-making processes.

3- Social Rented Homes

These are properties rented out by local councils or housing associations to people who are most in need of them. They offer low rents and long-term tenancy agreements to provide stability for vulnerable tenants.

4- Affordable Rent Housing

This type of social housing offers rents that are higher than social rent but still lower than the market rate. The aim is to provide more affordable housing options for low-to-middle-income households.

5- Shared Ownership:

This scheme allows people to buy a share of a home and pay rent on the remaining share. It's designed to help people who can't afford to buy a home outright on the open market.

6- Intermediate Rent Homes:

These homes are rented at around 80% of the local market rate. They're designed to help middle-income households who earn too much to qualify for social rent but struggle with high private sector rents.

7- Council Housing:

These are homes owned and managed by local authorities. They're rented out to residents at below-market rates, providing affordable housing options for low-income households.

8- Housing Association Housing:

These are homes provided by non-profit organizations that work in partnership with local authorities. They offer a range of housing options, from affordable rent and shared ownership to supported housing for people with special needs.

9- Resident Management Organisation Properties:

These are properties where residents have taken on the management of services usually provided by the landlord. This could include things like cleaning, caretaking, and minor repairs.

10- Sheltered Housing:

This type of accommodation is designed for older people or those with disabilities who want to live independently but with some level of support. It typically includes self-contained flats with communal facilities and an alarm system for emergencies. [16]

Theories of Social Housing

Social housing can be examined through various theoretical lenses, each offering insights into its societal, economic, and spatial dimensions. Two notable theoretical perspectives are:

1. Universalist Models

Universalist models of social housing aim to provide access to affordable housing for a broad cross-section of the population. These models prioritize inclusivity and seek to create diverse communities within social housing developments. By promoting mixed-income neighbourhoods, universalist models aim to reduce social segregation and foster social cohesion. These approaches recognize housing as a fundamental human right and emphasize the importance of providing housing opportunities for individuals and families from various income levels and backgrounds. [1]

2. Targeted Models

Targeted models of social housing focus on allocating housing primarily or exclusively to specific groups such as low-income individuals, vulnerable populations, and key workers. These models address the specific needs of these groups and ensure they have access to safe, affordable housing. Targeted social housing programs recognize that certain groups may face unique challenges in accessing suitable housing, and by

targeting their housing interventions, they aim to address social inequalities and provide targeted support [1].

3. Housing as a Social Determinant of Health

This perspective views housing not just as a physical structure, but as a factor that can significantly impact the health and wellbeing of residents. It considers how various aspects of housing, such as its quality, affordability, and location, can affect physical and mental health outcomes. [17]

4. Social Relations of Housing

This perspective explores the social relationships and dynamics that are associated with housing. It considers how housing is not just a physical space, but also a social space where various social interactions and relations occur. [18]

5. Housing Policy and Social Welfare:

This perspective examines the role of housing within the broader context of social welfare policies. It considers how housing policies can be used as tools to address social inequalities and promote social welfare. [1]

Theoretical Frameworks for Housing Studies:

This perspective provides a framework for analyzing various aspects of housing, including tenure and housing consumption. It also questions models which uncritically assume liberal interventionist roles of government. [18]

Theory about Housing:

This perspective suggests that it may not be possible or desirable to construct a theory of housing; instead, one should apply theoretical resources developed in established disciplines and research fields in theorising housing-related topics⁴.

Theoretical perspectives provide frameworks for understanding the underlying principles, goals, and effectiveness of social housing initiatives. They contribute to shaping policies and interventions that aim to address housing disparities, promote social well-being, and ensure sustainable urban development. [19]

Successful Social Housing Programs and their Impact

In this chapter, I evaluate the implementation of successful social housing programs in various countries and regions. By analyzing these examples, we aim to gain a comprehensive understanding of the strategies, policies, and outcomes associated with effective social housing initiatives. The discussion will provide valuable insights into the positive impact of these programs on individuals, families, and communities, ultimately emphasizing the importance of addressing housing challenges and promoting social well-being.

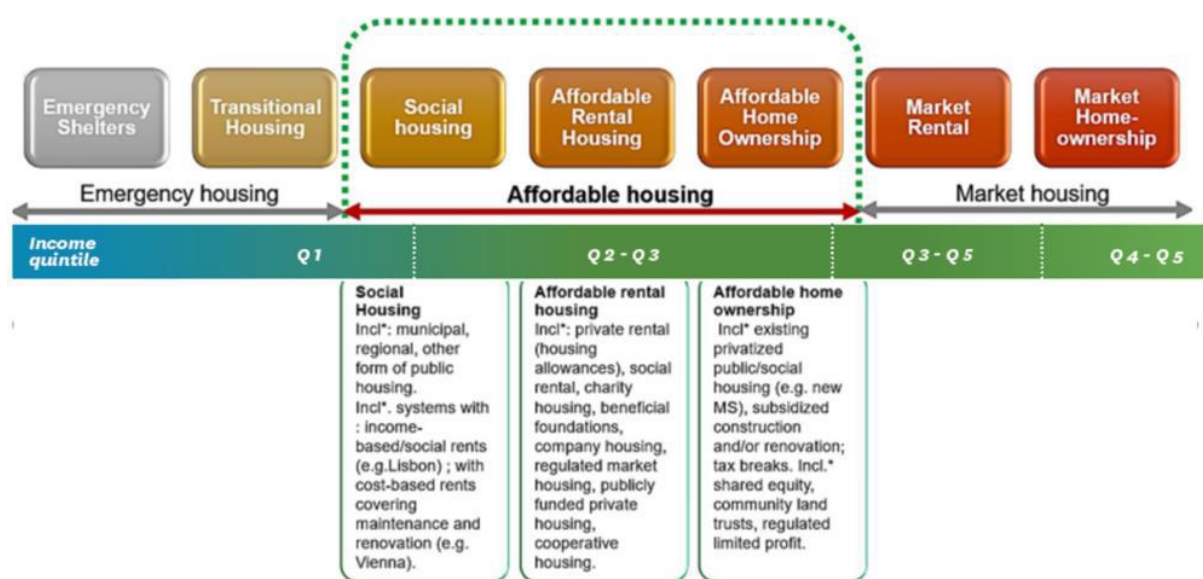


Figure 7 Affordable housing continuum according to income quintile (European Construction Sector Observatory Housing affordability and sustainability in the EU Analytical Report November 2019)

Successful Social Housing Programs

1. Belgium's Decentralized Social Housing System

One notable example of a successful social housing program is found in Belgium. The country has adopted a decentralized approach, distributing social housing responsibilities among three regions: the Brussels Region, Flemish Region, and Walloon Region. Social housing in Belgium is provided by municipalities, public companies, cooperatives, and non-profit organizations. The system is categorized into "social" housing, targeting individuals facing social or financial hardship, and "intermediate" housing, catering to those in less precarious situations but still

requiring public assistance. This multifaceted approach ensures that housing support is tailored to the specific needs of different groups within the population, fostering inclusivity and addressing varying levels of housing vulnerability.

2. Chile's Housing Programs for Reduced Inequality:

Chile has made significant strides in reducing housing inequality through its successful social housing programs. Over the years, the country has witnessed a notable decline in the proportion of families and individuals living in sub-standard housing or lacking adequate housing altogether. This achievement can be attributed to various provisions, including subsidies for low and middle-income households, rent-to-buy schemes, and rental subsidies. By providing financial assistance and affordable housing options, Chile's social housing programs have helped create more stable living conditions, improved housing quality, and reduced socio-economic disparities.

3. The "Tu Casa" and "Vivienda Rural" programs: Mexico

In Mexico, housing for low-income groups includes self-help housing and social housing. Over the past decade, programs like "Tu Casa" and "Vivienda Rural" have been introduced to support home construction, purchases, and renovations. The "Esta es tu Casa" program, initiated in 2007, aids households with incomes less than five times the minimum wage. These programs are administered through banks and housing institutions. Notably, Mexico's social housing sector is increasingly emphasizing sustainability and inner-city re-densification, aligning with long-term urban development goals. This Mexican context offers valuable insights for my thesis on housing policies and practices.

4. Spain right to housing

In Spain, the right to housing for citizens is constitutionally guaranteed. To address the housing crisis, the country has implemented measures such as allowing rent increases only every five years, linked to the inflation rate.

Unlike many European nations, Spain's housing landscape is predominantly characterized by owner-occupied properties, with individuals owning 95% of rental units, as opposed to institutions. This trend extends to the social housing sector, where a significant proportion of social houses are provided under freehold terms rather than subsidized rental arrangements. This unique housing dynamic in Spain offers an intriguing perspective for consideration within the context of my thesis on housing policies and practices.

5. United States Subsidized housing

In the United States, social housing primarily takes the form of "Subsidized housing" overseen by federal, state, and local agencies. Public housing, a cornerstone of this system, is priced below market rates, with federal programs often setting monthly rates at 30% of a household's income. Nationwide, over 1.2 million households are classified as beneficiaries of public housing, which is managed by approximately 3,300 public housing associations.

Eligibility for public housing in the United States hinges on factors such as annual gross income, citizenship or immigration status, as well as specific allowances for elderly individuals, persons with disabilities, or families. While local Housing Associations are responsible for the administration of social housing, the ultimate oversight and responsibility reside with the Department for Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This structure of social housing in the United States forms a significant component of my thesis on housing policies and practices. [20]

6. Successful Social Housing Programs: The Netherlands

The Netherlands boasts a well-established and effective social housing program that provides affordable housing options to low-income households, contributing to a more inclusive and equitable society. In the Dutch housing landscape, both social and private (non-subsidized) rental housing are available, each governed by specific regulations pertaining to tenant and landlord rights, security of tenure, rent structures, maintenance responsibilities, and service charges.

A noteworthy aspect of the Dutch social housing system is the prevalence of housing associations, which own approximately 75% of the 3 million rental homes across the country. These housing associations play a pivotal role in facilitating the rental of social housing units. Specifically, social housing units are those for which the initial monthly rent falls below the rent threshold defined for liberalized tenancy agreements within the private sector. As of 2023, this threshold is set at €808.06.

An integral feature of the Dutch social housing landscape is the allocation of vacant social housing units, with housing associations mandated to allocate 92.5% of these units to individuals with a household income of up to €44,035 (for one-person households) or €48,625 (for multi-person households). A maximum of 7.5% of the units can be allocated to individuals with incomes exceeding these thresholds. However, in regions experiencing severe housing shortages, housing associations have the flexibility to negotiate with local municipalities and tenant associations to increase the percentage of free allocation, up to a maximum of 15%.

This approach reflects the Netherlands' commitment to making social housing accessible to those in greatest need, while also allowing for tailored solutions to address unique housing challenges in different regions. By offering affordable housing choices and financial support through housing benefits, the Dutch social housing program has significantly contributed to stable living conditions and the reduction of socio-economic disparities. Its success serves as a prominent example of a well-designed social housing program, offering valuable insights for the enhanced management of the built environment. [21] [20]

Impact of Social Housing Programs:

The impact of well-implemented social housing programs extends beyond the provision of affordable housing. Research has shown that these initiatives yield significant benefits for individuals, families, and communities. For instance, rental assistance programs have been found to mitigate issues such as overcrowding, housing instability, and homelessness. One study revealed that rental assistance

substantially decreased the percentage of families residing in shelters or on the streets, while also reducing overcrowded living conditions by more than half. This evidence underscores the critical role of social housing in enhancing housing security, promoting stable communities, and reducing the hardships associated with inadequate housing². [22]

By adopting decentralized models, tailoring assistance to specific needs, and providing diverse housing options, these countries have effectively addressed housing challenges and reduced socio-economic disparities. Furthermore, rental assistance programs have proven instrumental in alleviating overcrowding, instability, and homelessness. These examples highlight the importance of implementing comprehensive and targeted social housing strategies to foster inclusive societies and improve the quality of life for individuals and families.

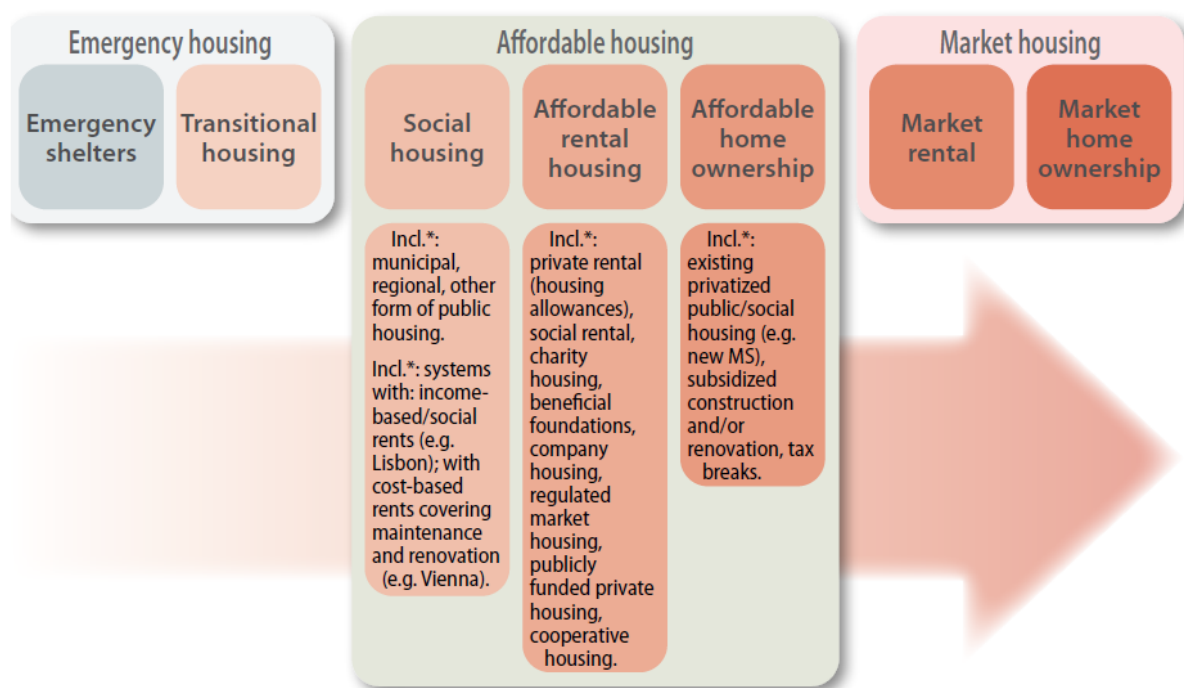


Figure 8 The housing continuum (Urban Agenda for the EU, The Housing Partnership Action Plan, December 2018)

² CBPP (2019)

Social Housing in Various Fields of Study

This chapter explores the research conducted in different fields of study, highlights notable studies and journals, and discusses their main findings and contributions to our understanding of social housing.

Economics

Economics plays a vital role in understanding the financial aspects of social housing. Researchers in this field analyze the economic forces shaping housing markets, affordability, finance, and the role of public policies. They assess the effectiveness of housing interventions and policies, exploring potential impacts on affordability, investment, and market stability [1].

Geography

Geography examines spatial patterns and the distribution of housing resources. Geographers investigate spatial inequalities in access to affordable housing, the location of social housing developments, and their impacts on neighborhood dynamics and social cohesion. They explore the relationship between housing and the broader urban context, including urban segregation, gentrification, and the spatial distribution of housing opportunities [23].

Sociology

Sociology explores the social dimensions of housing. Sociologists investigate social inequalities, interactions, and structures influencing housing outcomes. They examine housing quality, tenure, social exclusion, and the impacts of housing on individuals and communities. Sociological research provides insights into social dynamics within social housing communities and the ways housing policies and practices shape social relationships and well-being [17]

Architecture, Urban Planning, and Design

These disciplines focus on the physical aspects of housing, the built environment, and how social housing integrates into broader urban contexts. Researchers in these fields explore innovative design approaches and sustainable building practices to improve the quality and livability of social housing while investigating the relationship between housing and neighborhood design. This emphasis aims to create inclusive and resilient housing environments within the broader urban landscape. Furthermore, the field of Urban Planning within this framework delves into how social housing is integrated into broader urban environments, its role in urban regeneration initiatives, and the influence of urban planning policies on the availability and quality of social housing [24] [25].

Public Policy

Research in public policy involves studying the effectiveness of current social housing policies, exploring potential policy innovations, and understanding how different policy approaches impact social housing outcomes [1].

Environmental Studies

Research can be conducted on the environmental impacts of social housing, including studying the sustainability of social housing developments and exploring how social housing can contribute to environmental goals [17].

Health Studies

The impact of social housing on health outcomes is another important area of research. This includes studying the effects of housing quality on physical and mental health, as well as exploring how social housing policies can contribute to broader public health goals [17].

Interdisciplinary research across these fields offers a comprehensive understanding of social housing, recognizing its economic, social, spatial, and design dimensions. This

approach acknowledges that housing is not just about shelter but also a key determinant of well-being, social inclusion, and sustainable urban development.

Historical Research and Key Theoretical Background

Historical Overview of Social Housing

Social housing has a deep-rooted history that spans across different regions and time periods. Tracing the origins and development of social housing provides a comprehensive understanding of its evolution and sheds light on its significance in addressing housing challenges. In western European countries, the history of social housing has been extensively documented, particularly in central and northern European nations. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that southern European countries have experienced unique trajectories in housing policy and social housing due to distinct factors such as delayed urbanization and stronger rural settlement. [1] [26]

Before the 20th century, housing policies in western European countries were primarily shaped by market forces, with limited involvement from public entities. Social housing was not a prominent feature during this era, and government interventions in the housing market were relatively weak and temporary. However, the aftermath of World War II marked a significant turning point, as governments recognized the need for active measures to address housing challenges and began playing a more substantial role. [27] [1]

The post-World War II period witnessed a paradigm shift in social housing, with increased government intervention and support in many European countries. Governments acknowledged the importance of providing affordable and secure housing for their populations, particularly those in vulnerable situations. This led to the expansion and development of social housing programs aimed at meeting the housing needs of low-income individuals and families. [20] [1] [28]

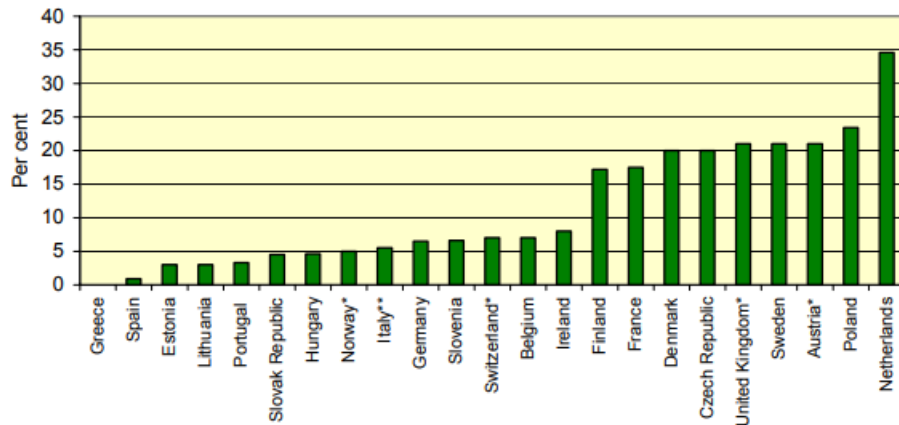


Figure 9 Share of social rental dwellings in the housing supply, circa 2000 (UNITED NATIONS, 2006)

The historical development of social housing was influenced by a myriad of factors, including the socio-economic and demographic context of each country, political dynamics, administrative structures, and legal frameworks. These contextual elements played a significant role in shaping the trajectory of social housing policies and programs.

For instance, the socio-economic and demographic landscape influenced the demand for housing, highlighting the need for affordable options to cater to low-income individuals and families. Political ideologies and priorities also played a role, as governments sought to address social inequalities and promote social welfare through housing initiatives. Administrative structures and legal frameworks were pivotal in establishing the governance and regulatory frameworks necessary for the implementation and management of social housing programs.

Studying the historical evolution of social housing provides researchers and policymakers with valuable insights. It allows them to examine past approaches, understand the challenges encountered, and identify successful strategies employed in different contexts. This knowledge can inform the development of effective and tailored social housing policies that respond to the evolving needs of societies and ensure access to safe, affordable, and sustainable housing for all. [1]

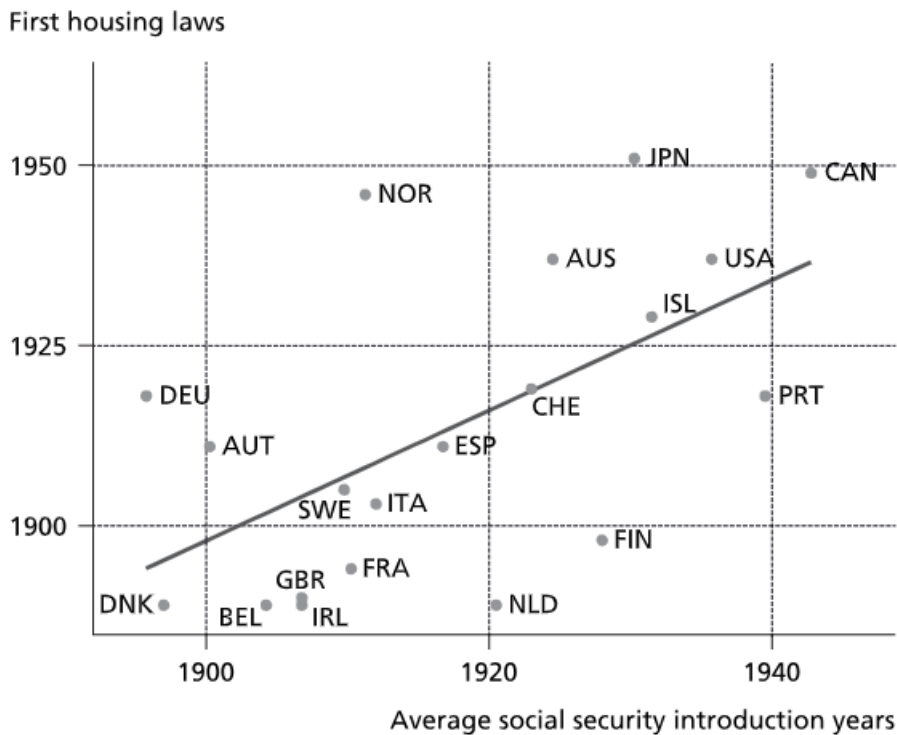


Figure 10 Introduction of housing laws and of social security. (Schmitt et al. (2015) for social security years.)

Key Theoretical Concepts in Social Housing

Affordability is a critical concept in social housing that addresses the affordability gap experienced by low-income households. It refers to the ability of individuals and families to access and afford suitable housing without compromising their basic needs. Achieving affordability in social housing requires various factors to be considered. Adequate funding and provision of housing, efficient economic planning, and the use of appropriate construction technology are essential elements for ensuring affordability [4].

Target groups for social housing are typically identified as households facing housing-related challenges, such as difficulties in accessing suitable accommodation. The existing literature predominantly emphasizes the inclusion of low-income households within this category. However, it's crucial to acknowledge that in numerous countries, social housing policies, especially during the postwar era, were initially designed to cater to a broad spectrum of the middle-class population across European nations. Therefore, viewing the "in need" population as a dynamic and politically defined

group, we may find that this narrow definition lacks the necessary flexibility and nuance to comprehensively address the complexities of social housing [29].

Accessibility is another key concept in social housing that emphasizes the availability of suitable housing options for individuals and families. It encompasses physical and geographical factors that determine whether housing is easily accessible and meets the specific needs of diverse households. Effective land use planning plays a crucial role in improving accessibility by ensuring proximity to amenities, public transportation, and essential services [30].

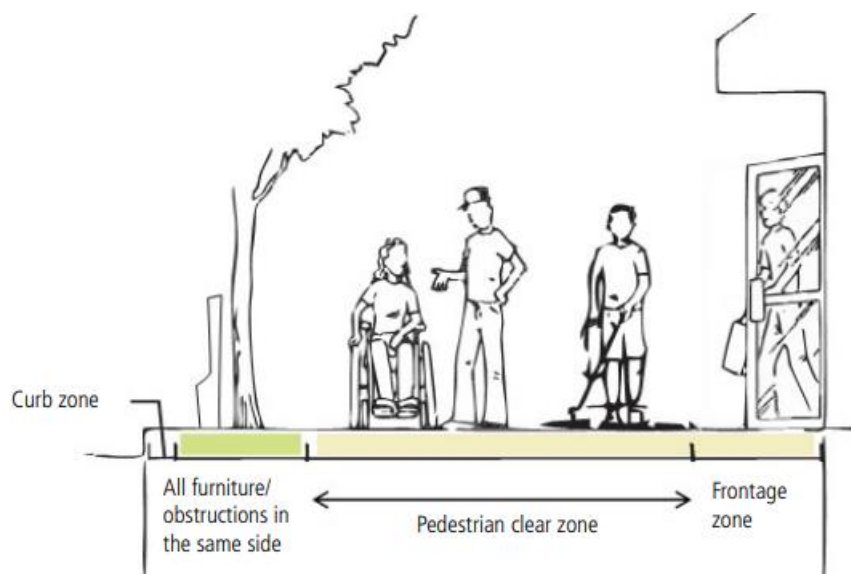


Figure 11 Street furniture view (© UN-Habitat 2014, Adapted from (Inter-American Development Bank , 2007) and (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) Division for Social Policy and Development, 2004)

Social mix is a concept that seeks to create mixed-income communities within social housing developments. It emphasizes the importance of diverse socio-economic backgrounds living together, fostering social cohesion and reducing social exclusion.

The idea behind social mix is that by bringing together individuals from different income levels, a more inclusive and supportive community can be established. However, the impact and effectiveness of social mix in social housing are still

OPTIONS FOR TENURE MIX

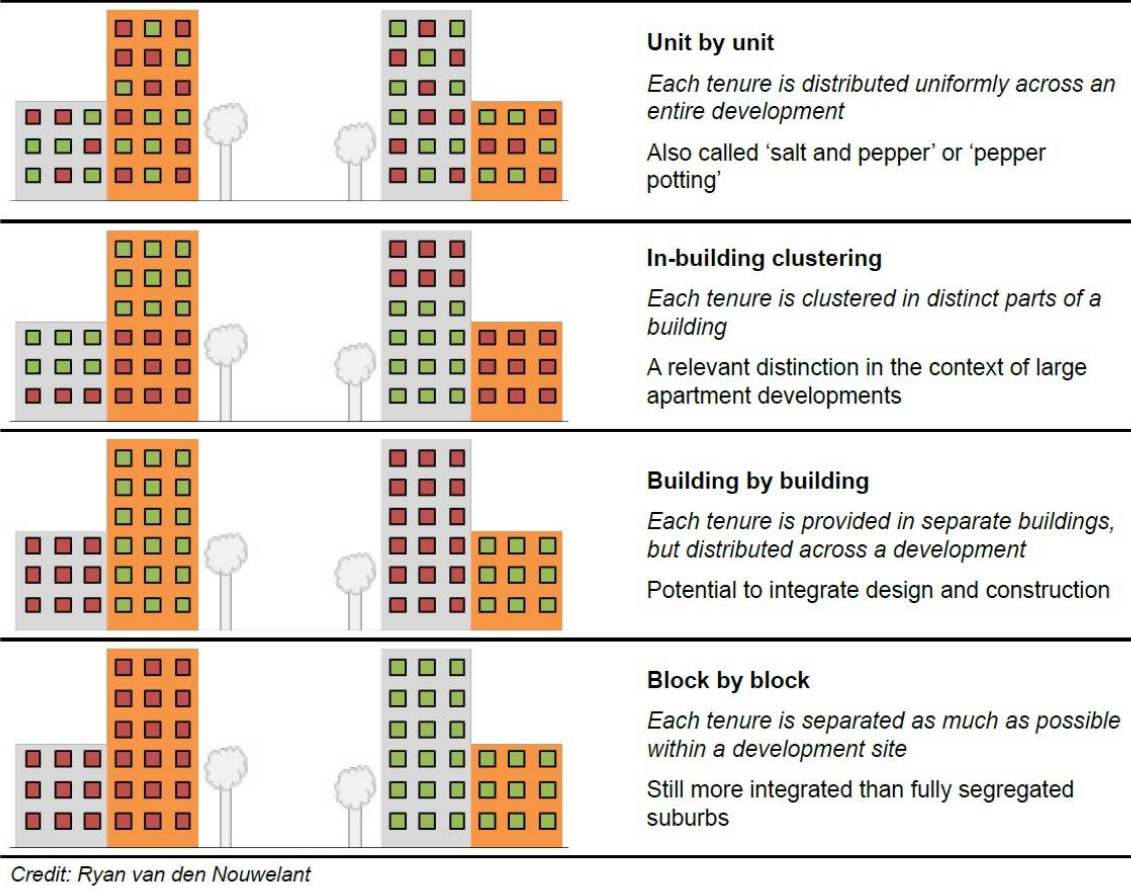


Figure 12 Options For Tenure Mix (Ryan van den Nouwelant,2017)

Sustainability is a key concept in social housing that encompasses environmental, economic, and social dimensions. It focuses on meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Environmental sustainability involves promoting energy efficiency, using environmentally friendly materials, and implementing green building practices. Economic sustainability considers the long-term viability of social housing programs and their ability to generate sufficient resources for maintenance and improvement. Social sustainability aims to ensure the security of lives and property, promote social cohesion, and enhance the overall well-being of residents [32].

These key theoretical concepts are interconnected and must be addressed holistically when designing and implementing social housing policies and programs.

Affordability, target groups, accessibility, social mix, and sustainability all contribute to the overall success and impact of social housing initiatives. By considering these concepts in conjunction with each other, policymakers and practitioners can develop comprehensive strategies that address the complex housing challenges faced by low-income individuals and promote inclusive and sustainable communities (Kjeldsen &

The Concept of Social Mix

The concept of social mix in the context of social housing has garnered significant attention in urban planning and housing policies. It revolves around the idea of promoting diversity and inclusivity within residential neighborhoods by incorporating a mixture of households from various income levels. Social mix initiatives aim to create balanced and vibrant communities that are representative of the broader society, fostering a sense of social cohesion and reducing the concentration of poverty in specific areas [33].

Definition of the Social Mix

Social mix is viewed as both a planning objective and a targeted solution for addressing the challenges faced by aging social housing estates. It is regarded as a fundamental principle of "good planning" as it encourages the creation of communities that are diverse and inclusive, transcending socio-economic boundaries. By bringing together individuals with different income levels, educational backgrounds, and cultural diversity, social mix initiatives strive to reduce social segregation and stigmatization associated with concentrated disadvantage. This holistic approach extends beyond housing policies to encompass broader urban development, emphasizing the importance of social interaction, economic integration, and a shared sense of belonging within mixed communities [33].

In the context of state-led integrated area-based urban renewal policies in Western European countries, the concept of social mix has emerged as a central element. Policymakers have advocated for the creation of mixed neighborhoods to address the

negative effects associated with the socio-spatial segregation of impoverished populations. This approach assumes that bringing together residents from different socioeconomic backgrounds, particularly middle and lower classes, would enhance the quality of life, foster social cohesion, and enhance the reputation of neighborhoods. Moreover, the promotion of neighborhood social mix is believed to offer low-income residents more opportunities to expand their social networks by interacting with middle-income groups, who are seen as potential 'role models.

However, despite the high expectations and claims that social mix can address urban issues such as inequality, deprivation, and social exclusion, numerous studies have raised doubts about the presumed benefits of residential mixing. [34]

Historical Context

The concept of social mix in Europe has a historical origin dating back to the industrial society, marked by significant class divisions and stable housing and labor careers. However, after World War II, the Western European countries witnessed the development of welfare states and economic prosperity, ensuring widespread access to housing, particularly for the middle class. This era also saw limited residential mobility, fostering territorially-based identities and a sense of community.

In the post-industrial society, a shift occurred. Since the 1980s, the welfare state began eroding in many European nations, resulting in increased socio-economic polarization and segregation. These developments risked weakening social cohesion and intergroup relationships.

Across Western Europe, similar trends have emerged. The labor market became more precarious, and housing careers became more flexible, impacting both housing demand and supply. Growing social inequality and the neoliberal turn of the welfare state exacerbated access to affordable housing, especially after economic crises.

The role of the middle class in the housing market is becoming precarious. The assumption of social mix is that middle-class presence can serve as positive role

models for marginalized groups. However, research indicates that despite living in proximity, middle-class individuals often avoid mixing with lower-class neighbors, as social contact is influenced by lifestyle. Moreover, role models from sources like mass media also play a significant role.

Post-1990s social mix policies aim to increase diversity in neighborhoods based on income, social classes, and tenure composition. However, newer concepts like 'hyper-diversity' propose a more comprehensive understanding of diversity, challenging the basis of defining role model groups primarily based on socio-economic criteria.

Additionally, the traditional territorial view of social mix is being questioned in the age of increased mobility and online communication opportunities. The rise of online interactions challenges the effectiveness of area-based policies.

Considering these challenges, policymakers often apply social mix concepts without considering local specificities. The idea of social mix has travelled globally, and the following sections will delve into the debate on social mix in Italy and the Netherlands, considering domestic contexts and housing trends. This analysis will focus on the local adaptations of general social mix concepts, including the rationale, aims, institutional frameworks, scopes, target groups, and implementation methods.

[34]

Rephrasing the Concept of the Social Mix in Different Domains

Discourses

Social mix, a common theme in affordable housing initiatives, primarily aims to meet the housing demands of various groups. However, it places special importance on the mix between vulnerable (such as status-holders, welfare dependents, and homeless individuals) and resourceful groups (primarily students and young people). This mix is seen as a means of enhancing social inclusion for vulnerable individuals.

Historically, social mixed communities faced challenges due to middle-class avoidance of marginalized groups. Yet, recent initiatives aim to transform this

dynamic. They appeal to individuals who are willing to coexist with vulnerable people and offer help, shifting from a "Not In My Backyard" (NIMBY) to a "Welcome In My Backyard" (WIMBY) approach. This change in perspective is seen as a crucial strategy to address the housing needs of various groups.

Social inclusion in these projects is linked to the idea of self-reliance. Vulnerable tenants, by participating in these projects, find a supportive environment to rebuild their lives. This is especially true for projects where vulnerable tenants used to depend on public welfare support. Practitioners focus on boosting self-reliance through tailored programs and incentives for tenants to internalize desirable norms of conduct.

The link between social mix and inclusive communities reflects the evolving discourses of "responsibilization" and "activation" in welfare systems. Social inclusion depends on the active mobilization of individual resources and the promotion of responsible behaviors.

Target Groups

Early 21st-century social mix policies targeted low- and middle-income residents. However, current social mix initiatives distinguish between resourceful tenants (young workers or students) and vulnerable tenants (welfare dependents, low-income, and refugees). This distinction recognizes the significant differences within the category of "vulnerable tenants."

A key idea in these initiatives is that resourceful individuals should be willing to help their vulnerable neighbors, acting as role models and contributing to the community's well-being. Selection criteria for resourceful residents are based on both objective factors (income, age, citizenship) and subjective qualities like motivation and attitudes.

This focus on subjective features reflects the concept of "hyper-diversity," considering diversity not only in terms of ethnicity or income but also including age, lifestyles, and personal preferences.

Practices

Social mix in these initiatives goes beyond mere residential proximity of different social groups. It involves daily practices that promote positive encounters and community building. Activities range from sports and movie nights to language exchanges, walks, and cooking activities.

Tenants in these projects commit to being involved in social-oriented activities in exchange for benefits like lower rent prices or quicker housing provision. This conditionality applies during both the selection procedure and the tenancy, ensuring tenants' contribution to project objectives.

This practice of social mixing is grounded in a *quid pro quo* rationale, where selected tenants invest their time in social activities in return for housing benefits. This principle of conditionality is an important aspect of these initiatives, reshaping access to social housing opportunities.

Institutional Frame

The institutional frame of social mix initiatives has shifted from policy-based, area-wide approaches to project-based, local partnerships. These initiatives are managed by local-based partnerships that include housing providers, public authorities, and other organizations with relevant expertise.

This local-based approach is a result of devolution processes from central to local authorities in both the Netherlands and Italy. These initiatives mark a shift from area-based urban renewal policies to more individual-based strategies focusing on vulnerable groups.

Urban Downscaling

In contrast to past policies that focused on specific neighborhoods, social mix initiatives now aim to maximize the use of available resources to address unmet housing demand. These initiatives often take advantage of vacant buildings or plots of land. This approach reflects the idea of "doing more with less."

For instance, in Italy, vacancies in public housing are often due to mismanagement, while in the Netherlands, recent healthcare reforms have led to vacant spaces in former care homes. Project managers use these vacant spaces to launch social mix initiatives, offering more freedom in designing the type and balance of social mix.

The spatial scale of social mix has shifted from neighborhood-based to building-based, with a focus on maximizing the use of available resources to address emerging housing needs.

The concept of "social mix" has evolved in recent housing initiatives, driven by a combination of necessity and opportunity. These initiatives prioritize the interaction between vulnerable and resourceful groups and focus on the practices, conditions, and institutional frameworks that support social mixing at the building level. This reframing of social mix is characterized by a commitment to making the most of available resources to address housing challenges and promote social inclusion. [34]

The concept of social mix within social housing is multifaceted and debated. While it is considered an objective of "good planning" and a potential solution to challenges faced by aging social housing estates, its effectiveness is not universally accepted. Some researchers question the assumed benefits and argue that simply bringing together individuals from different income groups may not automatically lead to positive outcomes. Empirical evidence on the relationship between bio-demographic diversity and group performance within mixed-income neighborhoods remains inconclusive.

Benefits of Social Mix

Promoting social mix has become a policy goal in many national contexts, recognizing its potential benefits. Living in a mixed-income neighborhood offers opportunities for social interaction and exposure to diverse perspectives, fostering social cohesion and understanding among residents. It provides individuals from low-income backgrounds with access to resources, amenities, and networks that may not be

readily available in economically segregated neighborhoods. Moreover, social mix initiatives aim to combat negative neighborhood effects resulting from the concentration of disadvantage. By dispersing households with different social positions across a neighborhood, it is believed that the concentration of poverty and its associated challenges can be mitigated. Policymakers recognize that creating diverse neighborhoods can lead to enhanced social interactions, improved social mobility opportunities, and a more equitable distribution of resources [35].

Challenges of Social Mix

Implementing social mix policies is not without challenges. Ensuring genuine affordability, avoiding the displacement of low-income residents, and maintaining social mix over time require careful planning and ongoing monitoring. Critics argue that social mix initiatives may inadvertently lead to the displacement of low-income residents due to rising housing costs or gentrification processes. Cultural differences, social norms, and power dynamics can also hinder the development of genuine social networks, limiting the potential benefits of social mix initiatives [36].

In this section, we will discuss the specific challenges associated with social mix and potential strategies to address them.

Genuine Affordability and Displacement Prevention: One of the primary challenges in implementing social mix strategies is ensuring genuine affordability while preventing the displacement of low-income residents. As mixed-income neighborhoods become more desirable, property values and rental costs tend to increase, posing a risk of pricing out long-term residents. This can lead to gentrification and a loss of social diversity. To overcome this challenge, policymakers must adopt measures that protect the rights and tenure of existing residents, such as rent control, inclusionary zoning, or affordable housing quotas. It is crucial to strike a balance between attracting new residents and preserving the socioeconomic diversity within communities [35].

- **Maintaining Social Mix Over Time:** Another challenge lies in maintaining social mix over time. Without proactive interventions, mixed-income neighborhoods can experience a shift towards predominantly higher-income households, resulting in the loss of diversity and exacerbating social inequalities. Ongoing monitoring and policy adjustments are necessary to ensure a sustained balance of different income groups within communities. This can involve implementing mechanisms that limit rent increases, promoting mixed-tenure housing developments, or providing incentives for developers to include affordable housing units. By actively managing the composition of neighborhoods, policymakers can prevent the concentration of wealth in specific areas and preserve social mix [37].
- **Addressing Cultural Differences, Social Norms, and Power Dynamics:** The success of social mix initiatives relies on addressing cultural differences, social norms, and power dynamics within communities. Simply bringing individuals from diverse backgrounds together does not guarantee social cohesion and interaction. It is crucial to foster an inclusive environment that promotes meaningful connections and opportunities for social integration. This may require the provision of shared spaces, community programs, and initiatives that encourage dialogue, cultural exchange, and collaboration among residents. By creating an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere, social mix initiatives can overcome barriers and facilitate genuine social networks [38].
- **Overcoming Stereotypes and Prejudices:** Social mix strategies have the potential to challenge stereotypes and prejudices by facilitating interactions between individuals with different life experiences and perspectives. However, combating social stigmatization associated with poverty and fostering understanding require deliberate efforts. Education programs, community events, and initiatives that promote empathy and intercultural dialogue can

help break down barriers and create an inclusive environment that encourages positive interactions. By addressing stereotypes and prejudices, social mix initiatives can contribute to the overall well-being and social integration of residents . [39]

By addressing these challenges through careful planning, ongoing monitoring, and community engagement, social mix initiatives can contribute to creating more equitable, diverse, and sustainable neighborhoods.

Examples of Implementation:

Italy and the Netherlands provide examples of countries that have implemented social mix strategies in their housing initiatives. The Magic Mix project in the Netherlands targets a diverse range of social groups, aiming to create a socially vibrant and inclusive living environment. It emphasizes the value of diversity and the potential for mutual learning and support among residents. The Housing Sociale project in Italy aims to address social segregation by targeting a broad spectrum of social groups, creating mixed-income communities that foster a sense of belonging and shared responsibility [34] .

Outcomes and Potential for Development

Social mix strategies offer significant potential for facilitating social networks, increasing social capital, and enhancing social mobility among residents. By fostering interactions between individuals from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, social mix initiatives can cultivate a sense of belonging, challenge stereotypes, reduce stigmatization, and promote social cohesion. However, achieving and sustaining social mix within communities pose certain challenges that need to be addressed to ensure their success. This part explores the potential benefits of social mix strategies and highlights the key considerations for their implementation.

1. **Enhancing Social Mobility and Access to Resources:** One of the notable benefits of social mix strategies is their potential to improve social mobility. By

bringing together individuals from low-income backgrounds with those from higher income groups, social mix initiatives create opportunities for residents to access better resources, including education, employment prospects, and social networks. In mixed-income neighborhoods, individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds may have increased exposure to resources and support systems that are more prevalent in higher income communities

2. **Challenging Stereotypes and Prejudices:** Social mix initiatives provide a platform for individuals to engage with others who possess different life experiences and perspectives. This interaction can lead to increased understanding, empathy, and a broader appreciation of diversity. By challenging stereotypes and prejudices, social mix strategies contribute to combating social stigmatization associated with poverty. This, in turn, promotes the overall well-being and social integration of residents, fostering more inclusive and cohesive communities.
3. **Reducing Social Inequality:** Social mix strategies have the potential to challenge the existing social order and promote more equitable communities. By breaking down barriers and fostering interactions across different income groups, these initiatives help reduce social inequality. They provide opportunities for individuals from low-income backgrounds to bridge the gap and access resources and opportunities that might otherwise be limited. As a result, social mix strategies contribute to a fairer distribution of resources and enhanced social mobility.
4. **Fostering Inclusive Environments:** Creating inclusive environments is crucial for the success of social mix initiatives. Merely bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds does not guarantee social cohesion and interaction. To foster an inclusive environment, it is important to establish shared spaces, community programs, and initiatives that encourage social integration and active participation. Such measures promote meaningful connections and

interactions among residents, enabling them to build relationships and networks that enhance social capital.

Social mix initiatives aim to create diverse and inclusive neighborhoods by integrating individuals from different socio-economic backgrounds. These strategies offer potential benefits such as improved social mobility, reduced stigmatization, and increased social cohesion. However, addressing challenges related to genuine affordability, preventing displacement, addressing cultural differences, and fostering inclusive environments are critical for the successful implementation of social mix strategies. By carefully planning, continuously monitoring, and engaging the community, social mix can contribute to the creation of more equitable and vibrant communities.

A Paradigm Shift in Social Mix Concepts and Challenges in Implementation

In this subchapter, we delve into the changing landscape of social mix policies and their implementation, shedding light on two distinctive aspects that have emerged from our analysis.

A Shift from Middle-Class Attraction to Resourceful Tenants

Traditionally, social mix policies aimed to attract middle-class residents to low-income neighborhoods, primarily through tenure mix. However, recent initiatives have undergone a significant transformation. Instead of merely focusing on income levels, they strive to bring in resourceful tenants who possess not only socio-cultural and human capital but also the willingness to share it with their neighbors. These "role model" residents play a crucial part in fostering interactions among tenants from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. This shift marks a new approach, recognizing the importance of personal attitudes and motivation for intercultural interaction, surpassing mere differences in income and tenures.

The Challenge of Sustaining Social Mix Initiatives

Sustaining social mixing as a set of daily practices demands tenants' active engagement in community-building activities. While these initiatives represent a temporal or transitional phase in housing careers, they rely on establishing warm and lasting relationships among neighbors to foster community development. Despite commendable intentions, the long-term sustainability of these projects faces potential challenges. To ensure their effectiveness, two mechanisms are critical: a relatively high turnover rate of residents and a conditionality element, where tenants agree to participate in community-oriented activities in return for affordable rents.

The high turnover rate continually brings in new, motivated individuals who can contribute fresh perspectives and energies to maintain established project goals. However, ensuring the willingness of residents to participate in community-oriented activities without feeling coerced is crucial for promoting social interaction. While this paper reflects policymakers' expectations for recent projects, future research is recommended to explore the practical implications and outcomes of social mix projects, particularly the development of social relationships between tenants. It is also essential to examine how different scales of social mix projects and differences between social groups affect project outcomes.

Furthermore, understanding the mechanisms for measuring tenants' contributions to project goals and addressing potential implications if expectations are not met is essential. The use of a quid pro quo system, where tenants exchange supportive actions for affordable rents, may raise questions of fairness, especially if the number of similar projects increases or moves beyond ad-hoc local opportunities. In an era of housing residualization in Europe, we must critically evaluate whether tying affordable housing to subjective attitudes and social commitment is a just and universal approach, particularly in countries with a limited supply of de-commodified housing stock, such as Italy. [34]

Historical Review of Research Studies

Historical research plays a crucial role in enhancing our understanding of social housing policies and practices. By examining past developments and trends, researchers can shed light on the factors that have shaped the current landscape of social housing. This section aims to provide a comprehensive historical review of relevant research studies on social housing. By examining a diverse range of studies, this review offers a thorough understanding of the existing body of knowledge on social housing, encompassing various geographical locations, methodologies, and themes.

- The study conducted by Costarelli, Kleinhans, and Mugnano (2019) titled "Reframing social mix in affordable housing initiatives in Italy and in the Netherlands" focuses on the concept of social mix in affordable housing projects. The researchers analyze two case studies—the Magic Mix project in the Netherlands and the Housing Sociale project in Italy—to explore how social mix is understood and practiced in these contexts. By investigating these initiatives, the study delves into the wider housing policies and debates surrounding social mix in the respective countries. [34]

Table 1. Main features of the case studies (Housing Sociale).

Name	Dwellings	Tenancy (max)	Target groups	Partners	Start	Characteristics
Ospitalità Solidale	24	Two years	Young people (18-30 years old) mixed up with low-income, public housing tenants.	Housing cooperative DAR=CASA, associations Arci, Comunità Progetto, Municipality of Milan.	2014	Scattered social mix programme in refurbished public housing units in District 4 and 9.
Casa dell'Accoglienza	Six (three studios, three two-room apartments)	18 months	People with disability or less invalidating problems, students, elderly, low-middle income groups, single parent households.	Municipality of San Donato Milanese, cooperatives: La Strada, Consorzio SIS, Spazio Aperti Servizi.	2015	Temporary accommodation for households in urgent housing need. Two-storeys house with communal ground floor available to tenants and neighbourhood initiatives.

Source: own elaboration based on interviews transcripts

Table 2. Case studies description (Magic Mix).

Name	Dwellings	Tenancy (max)	Target groups	Partners	Start	Characteristics
Startblok Riekerhaven	565 (463 studios, 102 rooms in shared units)	Five years	Status-holders and Dutch students or workers (18-27 years).	Housing association De Key, housing organisation Socius Wonen, Municipality of Amsterdam.	2016	Two/three-storeys blocks of removable housing units where tenants are mixed door-to-door. Renters are expected to manage communal spaces and liveability-related issues by themselves.
Majella Wonen	70 social housing units	Three years	35 dwellings allocated to self-selected tenants (Portaal) and 35 dwellings to vulnerable ones (De Tussenvoorziening clients).	Housing association Portaal, social service organisation De Tussenvoorziening.	Mid-2016	The community provides guidance and support to help vulnerable tenants gaining self-reliance. Tenants are mixed door-to-door.

Table 2 Case Studies, (Costarelli, I., Kleinhans, R., & Mugnano, S (2019))

- Another notable study by van Gent and Hochstenbach (2020) titled "The neo-liberal politics and socio-spatial implications of Dutch post-crisis social housing policies" examines the changes in Dutch housing policy following the 2008 global financial crisis. The researchers specifically focus on the 2015 Housing Act and the accompanying legislation, as well as the introduction of a landlord levy targeting housing associations. By adopting a critical perspective, the study argues that these policy changes represent a process of neo-liberalization and institutional re-regulation. It explores the socio-spatial implications of these reforms and discusses their impact on social housing provision and the lives of residents. [40]

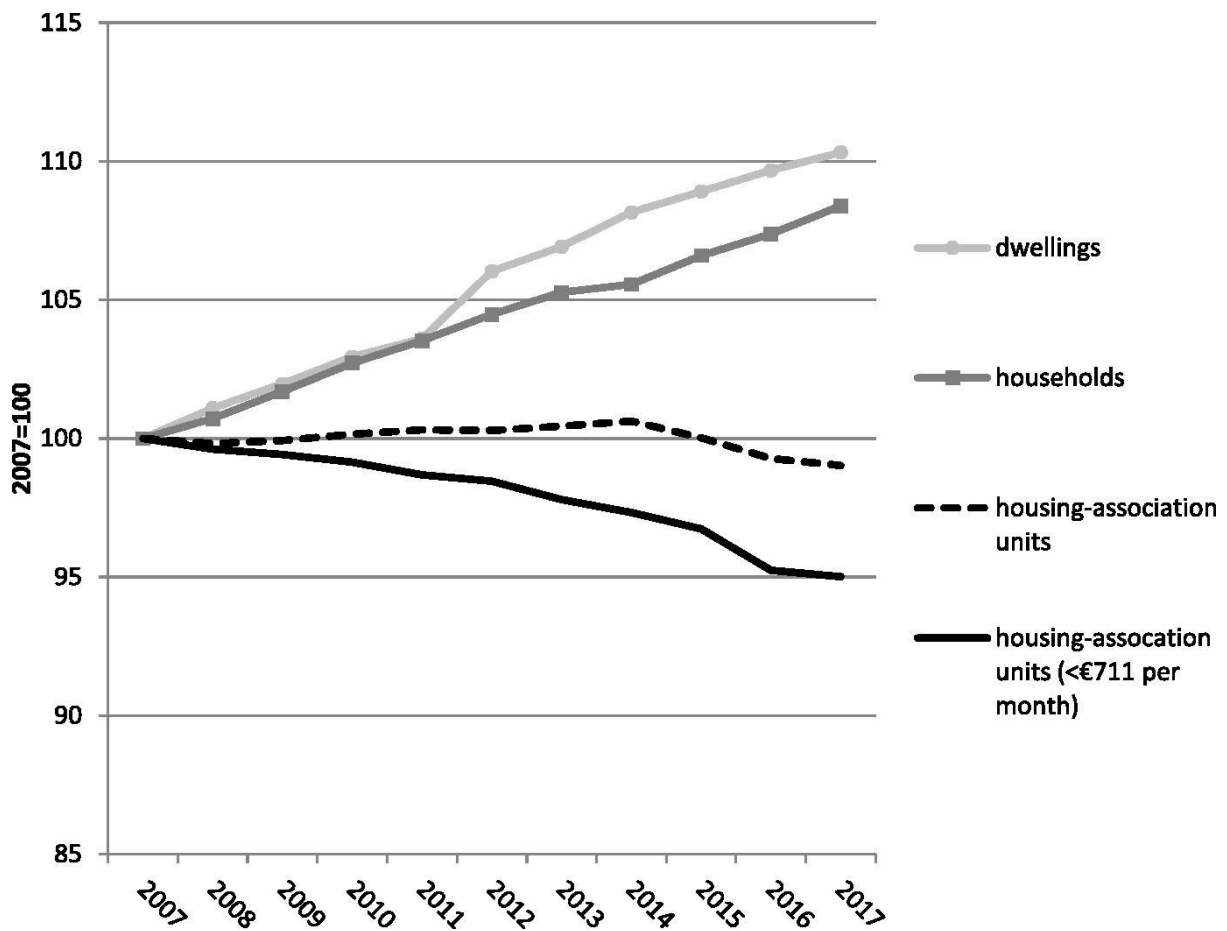


Figure 13 Development of the number of Dutch housing-association units (total and rent regulated), Source: Aedes (2019) for housing-association units; CBS (2018) for households and total dwellings

- One significant study conducted by the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies (2023) is The People's Housing: Woningcorporaties and the Dutch

Social Housing System, which focuses on providing an overview of the Dutch social housing system. The study reveals that approximately 29 percent of the total housing stock in the Netherlands consists of social housing, which is owned and managed by a decentralized network of 284 non-profit housing associations. These associations operate without direct subsidies, relying on rental income and long-term loans for funding construction projects. With approximately 2.3 million units of social housing, valued at €87.3 billion, the Dutch system presents a unique case study for understanding the organization and financing of social housing. [41]

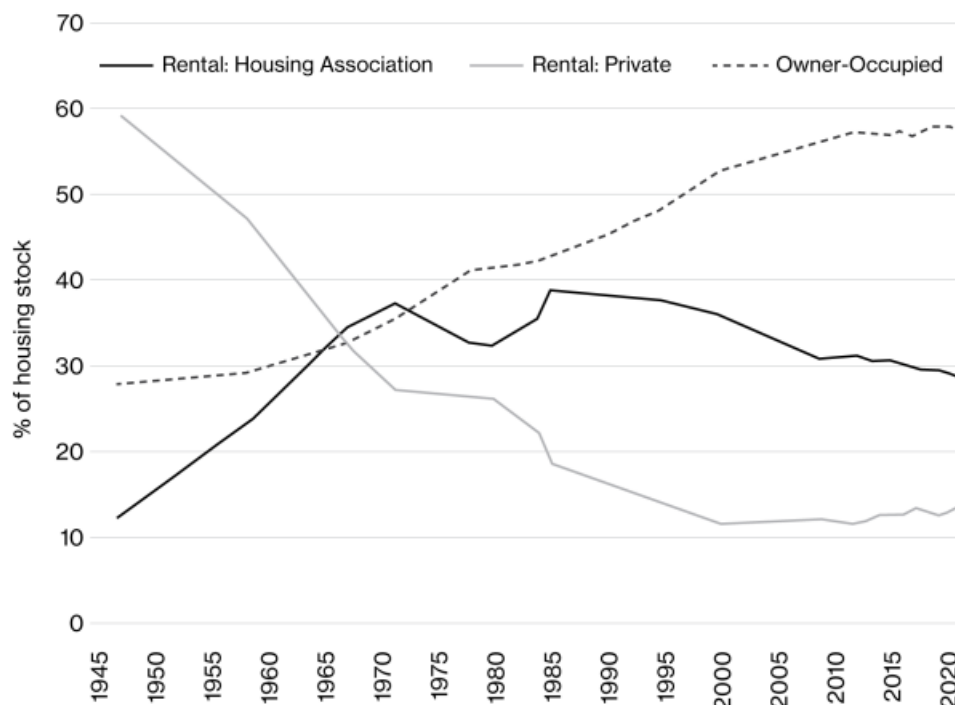


Figure 14 Dutch Housing Stock by Sector (Cody Hochstenbach, *Uitgewoond*. 2022)

- Another study is *Bridging Health, Housing, and Generations: What the United States Might Learn from Germany's Intentional Multigenerational Housing Demonstrations* conducted by the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies (2023) explores the potential benefits of multigenerational housing settings, drawing from Germany's *Wohnen für (Mehr)Generationen* program. This research investigates the positive outcomes of shared, multigenerational housing, including improved affordability, reduced social isolation, and

enhanced health and wellbeing. By adopting a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews and quantitative data analysis, the study highlights the importance of considering innovative housing models to address population aging and housing affordability challenges in the United States. [42]

- Rolfe et al. delve into the role of housing in tenants' health and wellbeing in west central Scotland in *Housing as a Social Determinant of Health and Wellbeing: Developing an Empirically-Informed Realist Theoretical Framework*. This study utilizes mixed methods, incorporating quantitative data from a longitudinal study involving tenants from three housing organizations. Through a realist research approach, the study develops a theoretical framework that elucidates the intricate connections between tenants' housing experiences and their overall health and wellbeing. This framework contributes to a deeper understanding of housing as a social determinant of health, emphasizing the importance of considering housing conditions and interventions in promoting positive health outcomes [17].
- The Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies (2023) presents an overview of the current state of the housing market in the United States. The *State of the Nation's Housing 2023* report highlights a cooling trend in housing markets, characterized by declining home sales, reduced construction levels, and slower rent growth. Rising costs pose challenges for both homeowners and renters, necessitating the exploration of affordable housing solutions to address the evolving dynamics of the housing market. The findings are based on extensive data analysis and market research, providing valuable insights for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners in the field. [43]
- *The Remarkable Stability of Social Housing in Vienna and Helsinki: A Comparative Analysis* published in *Housing Studies* (2022) focuses on the

provision of social housing in Vienna and Helsinki, highlighting its significant role in both cities as a means of supplying affordable housing. By employing a comparative analysis approach, this research sheds light on the factors shaping housing outcomes in these cities. The study emphasizes the complexity of social housing provision, which is influenced by demand-side developments and interactions with other housing tenures. By considering the local context and dynamics, this study contributes to a better understanding of social housing stability and its impact on urban communities. [43]

- Alaie et al. (2022) conducted a systematic review on social sustainability in housing, identifying indicators and factors influencing social sustainability. This study unveiled five dimensions of social sustainability: physical, functional, semantic-perceptual, environmental, and economic. The framework provided valuable insights into factors that contribute to residents' well-being and quality of life, facilitating the evaluation and design of socially sustainable housing projects [37].
- The OECD (2020) report on social housing highlights its pivotal role in housing policy. It showcases variations in social housing across countries and presents successful models from nations like Austria, Denmark, and the Netherlands. This report contributes significantly to policy discussions and informs the development of effective social housing strategies tailored to specific contexts [1].
- “Summary of Social Housing Assessments 2021 – Key Findings” by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage offers a comprehensive assessment of households qualified for social housing support

but currently unmet. This report provides insights into the need for social housing support nationwide, aiding policymakers in addressing this demand [44].

- The “English Housing Survey 2020-21” by the UK Government furnishes a national overview of housing circumstances in England. It covers social renters' profiles, satisfaction levels, housing costs, dwelling conditions, and energy efficiency. This survey aids in understanding the dynamics of social housing in England and its broader impact . [45]
- “Value for money metrics and reporting 2022” by the Regulator of Social Housing emphasizes the importance of social housing and offers value for money metrics for the social housing sector in 2022. This report informs stakeholders about the financial aspects of social housing, contributing to efficient resource allocation and decision-making [46].
- The “The State of Housing in Europe [47]” is a flagship publication by Housing Europe that provides a comprehensive analysis of the current housing situation across various European countries. The report explores a range of topics including the impact of global events on public, cooperative, and social housing, the link between housing and health, and the developments in national and EU housing policies. It also provides detailed country profiles, offering insights into the specific challenges and solutions within each context. The report serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, researchers, and anyone interested in understanding the complexities of the housing sector in Europe.

- Housing Studies [48] is an international journal from UK that covers a wide range of housing-related topics. It invites contributions from multiple disciplines, fostering a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach to understanding social housing.
- Housing2030, Effective policies for affordable housing in the UNECE region [49], a collaborative research by Housing Europe, UNECE, and UN-Habitat, is designed to empower both national and local governments to formulate policies that enhance the affordability and sustainability of housing. The initiative concentrates on four primary areas: strategies for land policy and planning, instruments for funding and financing, regulation and good governance, and standards for energy and environment to foster a more sustainable future. It offers a set of effective solutions for housing policy that policymakers can utilize. Furthermore, the initiative demonstrates how policymakers can enhance affordable housing results while also contributing positively to addressing ongoing climate change and stimulating the social and economic recovery necessitated by the pandemic.
- "The remarkable stability of social housing in Vienna and Helsinki: a multi-dimensional analysis" [43] by Kadi and Lilius (2022) delves into the stability and success of social housing in Vienna and Helsinki. It employs a multidimensional approach, uncovering the factors contributing to effective social housing systems. Lessons learned from these case studies can be applied in other contexts.
- Housing Policy Debate [50] focuses on original research related to housing policy and planning, covering topics such as affordable housing,

homelessness, housing finance, and community development. It plays a crucial role in shaping effective housing policies and practices.

- The Journal of Housing and the Built Environment [51] examines the interaction between the built environment and social, economic, and physical aspects. It provides insights into the complexities of housing provision and its impact on the broader built environment.
- “Housing as a social determinant of health and wellbeing: developing an empirically-informed realist theoretical framework” [17] by Steve Rolfe, Lisa Garnham, Jon Godwin, Isobel Anderson, Pete Seaman & Cam Donaldson examines the role of less tangible aspects of the housing experience for tenants in the social and private rented sectors in west central Scotland.
- “The State of the Nation’s Housing 2022” [52] delves into the intricacies of the housing market, offering a comprehensive analysis of its current state and the turning points that have unfolded. After a record-shattering year in 2021, the housing market is at an inflection point. Higher interest rates have taken some heat out of the homebuying market, and the large number of apartments under construction should bring some relief on the rental side. For lower-income households and households of color, though, the pressure of high housing costs is unlikely to relent.”
- “Social housing: A key part of past and future housing policy” by OECD [1], This study Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development discusses the role of social housing as an important dimension of social welfare policy and affordable housing provision.

- “The housing crisis is getting worse – how can we fix it?” [53] by World Economic Forum discusses the global housing crisis and its impacts. It highlights that a significant number of people will need access to adequate housing in the near future. It also mentions that a large population could be affected by the global housing shortage. The article explores the causes of this crisis and discusses potential solutions that various countries are implementing to tackle the issue



Figure 15 House Price-to-Income Ratio Around The World (bank for international settlements and world economic outlook(2021))

- “Social Housing and Affordable Rent: The Effectiveness of Legal Thresholds of Rents in Two Italian Metropolitan Cities” [54] by Grazia Napoli, Maria Rosa Trovato, and Simona Barbaro. examines whether legal thresholds for rents generate social fairness and housing affordability within each city and between different cities, or instead inequalities and spatial asymmetries.

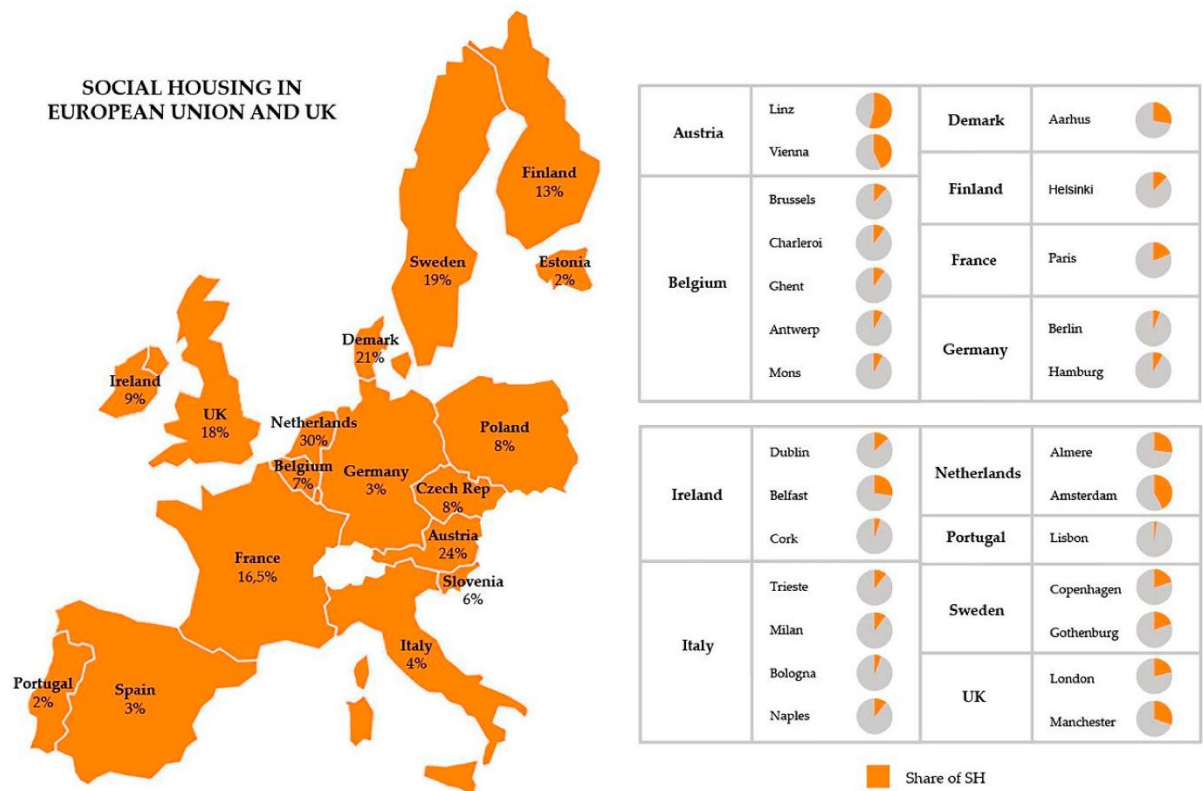


Figure 16 Social housing in the European Union and the United Kingdom in 2019

Drawing from a comprehensive collection of research studies, articles, and journals, these findings collectively enhance our understanding of the multifaceted field of social housing. They span from theoretical perspectives to real-world applications, contributing to the ongoing discourse on housing policy, affordability, and social well-being. These insights also shed light on the current state of social housing, its associated challenges, and potential solutions. They serve as valuable resources for policymakers and researchers, offering guidance on affordable housing provision, social sustainability, and the development of effective housing policies.

Methodologies Employed

The reviewed studies employ various research methodologies to investigate different aspects of social housing. These methodologies include data analysis, mixed-methods approaches, realist research frameworks, and comparative analysis. Data analysis is frequently employed to examine housing market trends, affordability levels, and the impact of housing policies. Mixed-methods approaches allow researchers to gather

both qualitative and quantitative data, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the complex social dynamics related to housing. Realist research frameworks facilitate the exploration of causal mechanisms and contextual factors that influence housing outcomes. Comparative analysis, on the other hand, allows for the identification of similarities and differences in social housing provision across different regions and countries.

Gaps and Future Directions

By reviewing these research studies, it becomes evident that the field of social housing is multifaceted and continually evolving. Despite the extensive body of research, several gaps and areas for further exploration emerge. For instance, there is a need for more studies that focus on the experiences of marginalized populations within social housing, such as individuals with disabilities, refugees, and low-income families. Additionally, research could delve deeper into the intersectional nature of housing inequalities, considering how gender, race, and other social factors shape housing outcomes. Future studies may also benefit from adopting innovative research methodologies, such as data-driven approaches and predictive analytics, to anticipate housing market trends and inform evidence-based policymaking.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the literature review provides a comprehensive understanding of social housing and its significance in the built environment. The concept of social housing has evolved over time, and its role in addressing housing challenges is crucial in promoting social, economic, and environmental well-being. The review explores various theoretical concepts related to social housing, including affordability, accessibility, social mix, and sustainability, highlighting their importance in shaping housing policies and practices.

Examining social housing from different fields of study reveals a multidimensional perspective. Research from social sciences, economics, real estate, civil engineering,

and other disciplines contributes valuable insights into the understanding of social housing. These studies shed light on the diverse impacts of social housing programs, the effectiveness of different policy approaches, and the social and economic outcomes for residents.

The concept of social mix emerges as a significant aspect of social housing initiatives. By promoting diversity and inclusivity within residential neighbourhoods, social mix aims to create balanced and vibrant communities. It offers potential benefits such as social cohesion, reduced stigmatization, improved social mobility, and enhanced access to resources and opportunities. However, challenges exist in achieving and maintaining social mix, including ensuring affordability, preventing displacement, and addressing cultural differences and power dynamics.

The historical review of research studies provides a comprehensive overview of relevant literature on social housing. These studies have explored various aspects of social housing, including its historical development, types, theories, and implementation strategies. The findings from these studies contribute to our understanding of social housing's complexities, challenges, and potential for positive change.

In summary, the literature review demonstrates that social housing is a multifaceted topic that requires interdisciplinary approaches and ongoing research. It emphasizes the importance of social mix in creating inclusive communities and addresses the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing social housing initiatives. By incorporating the insights gained from this review, policymakers and practitioners can make informed decisions to develop effective social housing policies that promote equitable, sustainable, and thriving communities.

Data and Methodology

The methodology chapter of this thesis presents the framework and approach used to examine and compare social housing policies and practices in the Netherlands and Italy. This chapter outlines the data sources, measurement techniques, and analytical methods employed to achieve my research objectives. By employing a comprehensive methodology, I aim to provide valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the social housing systems in both countries and identify lessons for improved management of the built environment.

Data and Measurement

Data Sources

To construct a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of social housing policies, I meticulously selected a diverse range of data sources. Academic studies played a pivotal role, shedding light on the complexities of social housing policies and practices in the Netherlands and Italy. These studies, conducted by researchers and scholars with expertise in the field, ensure a high level of methodological rigor and reliability. For example, the work of Czischke and van Bortel (2018) offered an in-depth analysis of affordable housing policies in both countries. Their study not only examined the policies themselves but also delved into the broader social, economic, and political contexts in which these policies are implemented.

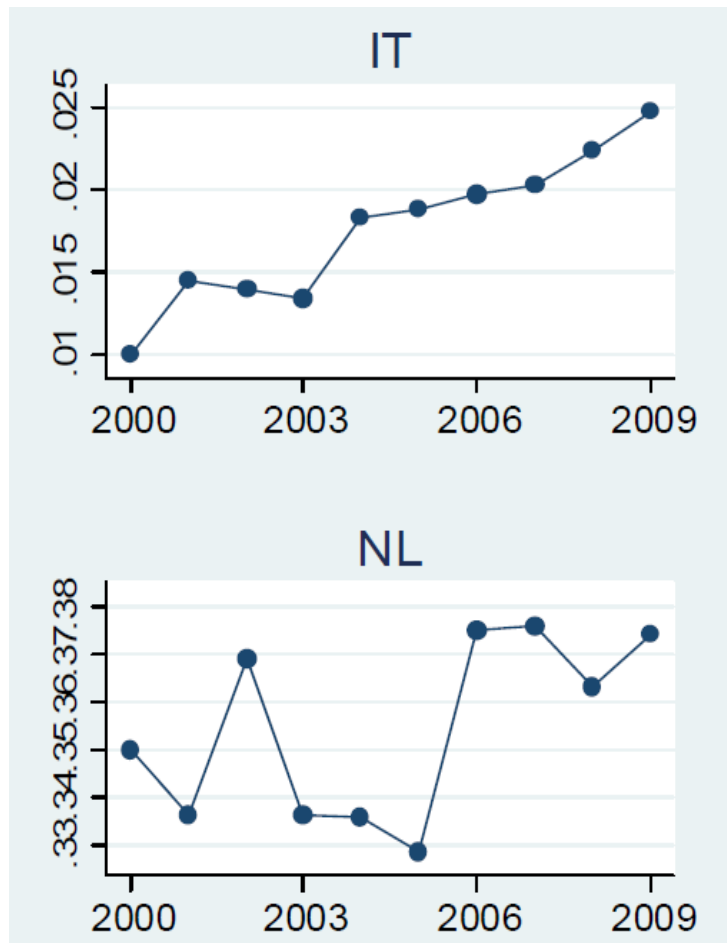


Figure 17 Rent benefits as percent of GDP in Italy and the Netherlands Eurostat (2022)

The methodology adopted by Czischke and van Bortel included a combination of desk research, interviews with key informants, and stakeholder workshops. This multi-method approach allowed for a comprehensive examination of the intricacies of social housing policies. Desk research involved a systematic review of existing literature, reports, and documents related to social housing in the Netherlands and Italy. Interviews with key informants, such as policymakers, housing experts, and representatives from housing associations, provided valuable insights into the rationale and decision-making processes behind these policies. Stakeholder workshops facilitated participatory discussions, enabling various stakeholders to share their perspectives and contribute to the research process. [55]

In addition to academic studies, government reports provided invaluable insights, offering authoritative perspectives on social housing policies implemented by national

and regional governments. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published a policy brief in 2017 that presented a comparative analysis of social housing policies across OECD and non-OECD EU countries, placing the Netherlands and Italy in an international context. These reports are a product of thorough research and analysis carried out by experts within the respective governmental departments. They often include data on housing affordability, housing supply, tenant demographics, and the impact of various policy measures. Furthermore, government reports provided insights into the historical development of social housing policies, highlighting the changing trends and priorities over time. [1]

Policy documents from government agencies and non-governmental organizations also enriched my research by providing detailed insights into specific housing programs, rent regulation measures, and other key aspects of social housing policies. For instance, the report titled "Policy and Practice: Affordable Housing in the Netherlands" published by the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL) in 2016 presented an overview of rent regulation and ownership policies in the Netherlands, shedding light on the mechanisms in place to ensure affordability and accessibility. Policy documents are often formulated after a thorough process of policy formulation and stakeholder consultation. They outline the goals of social housing policies, the target populations, and the specific measures implemented to achieve the desired outcomes. Policy documents also consider the financial implications and budget allocations for housing programs, providing a comprehensive understanding of the resources dedicated to social housing. [56]

Country	Mission	Allocation Criteria		Types of providers	Type of Public Support to Financing Social Housing	Sale of Social Rental Dwellings	Social housing rents and social allowance
		Eligibility	Priority				
Italy	Social rental housing : housing low-income people ; Social access to home ownership: housing middle class	Income ceilings, occupational or residential link with the municipality, and nationality	Point system based on housing conditions and number of dependent children	Local authority, Independent public body/public owned company, Cooperative, Other private non-profit, Private forprofit	Grants and interest rates subsidies from the region for subsidised housing	Sale to sitting tenants allowed	Income based rent (for public providers) / Fixed rent ceiling(s) (for private providers) + housing allowances
Netherlands	Housing Low- income people and intermediate groups	Varying across regions and municipalities; currently income ceiling apply	Households on relatively lower incomes	Other private non-profit	Public guarantees from central government	Sale to sitting tenants allowed	Income based rent / Value-based rent+ Housing allowances

Figure 18 Summary of Social Housing in Italy and the Netherlands (DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES POLICY DEPARTMENT A: ECONOMIC AND SCIENTIFIC POLICY Social Housing in the EU,2013))

Measurement Techniques

My research employs both quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques to provide a comprehensive examination of social housing policies and practices in the Netherlands and Italy. By integrating these approaches, I aim to derive more robust conclusions and offer valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners.

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative analysis involves exploring and identifying patterns, trends, and relationships within numerical data. My research will leverage statistical methods to conduct in-depth examinations of relevant indicators related to social housing. Regression analysis will be central to investigating potential relationships between specific policy measures and their observed impacts on social housing outcomes. By examining variables such as government expenditure on social housing, housing affordability indices, and housing supply data, I can assess the effectiveness of different policies and identify the key factors contributing to successful social housing programs. Additionally, hypothesis testing will determine the statistical significance of observed differences in policies between the two countries, providing insights into their relative successes and challenges. This will involve formulating null and alternative hypotheses based on theoretical expectations and conducting appropriate

statistical tests, such as t-tests or analysis of variance (ANOVA), to determine if the observed differences are statistically significant.

Descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, will be utilized to summarize numerical data effectively, facilitating comparison and interpretation of findings. Graphical representations, such as bar charts or line graphs, will aid in visually conveying trends and patterns in social housing policies and practices.

Qualitative Analysis

Complementing my quantitative analysis, I will conduct rigorous qualitative examinations of textual data derived from academic articles, government reports, and policy documents. Qualitative analysis allows me to explore underlying themes, concepts, and perspectives related to social housing policies and practices.

Content analysis will be the primary qualitative technique employed. By systematically coding and categorizing textual data, I will identify recurring themes and patterns in social housing policies and practices in the Netherlands and Italy. This process will involve reading through the texts and identifying key phrases or sentences that convey relevant information related to social housing policies. These codes will then be grouped into categories that reflect the main themes and concepts discussed in the literature. By conducting content analysis, I can delve deeper into the motivations behind policy decisions, the challenges faced by stakeholders, and the outcomes of various housing initiatives.

Furthermore, case study analysis will be instrumental in gaining an in-depth understanding of specific examples of social housing policies and practices in both countries. Selected case studies will represent diverse aspects of social housing, allowing me to extract valuable lessons from real-world scenarios. Through case study analysis, I will explore the context-specific factors influencing policy implementation, assess the impact on residents, and highlight best practices for achieving social

housing objectives. This qualitative approach will enable me to capture the nuances and complexities of social housing policies in the Netherlands and Italy, providing a more comprehensive picture of their effectiveness and implications.

Data Evaluation and Reliability

Ensuring the reliability and validity of my data sources is essential to the credibility of my research findings. Academic studies undergo peer review, a rigorous process in which experts in the field critically evaluate the research methodology, data analysis, and conclusions. This review process ensures that academic studies meet the highest standards of quality and validity. Similarly, government reports and policy documents, being official publications, carry a degree of trustworthiness. However, it is essential to critically evaluate the sources of data used in these reports to ensure they are based on accurate and up-to-date information. Triangulation, the process of using multiple data sources to corroborate findings, will be employed to enhance the research's robustness. By cross-referencing data from academic studies, government reports, and policy documents, I can develop a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of social housing policies and practices in the Netherlands and Italy.

In this pivotal subchapter of my thesis methodology, I have provided a comprehensive understanding of my data selection process, measurement techniques, and analytical methods. By addressing potential limitations and challenges related to data availability, reliability, and representativeness, I aim to reinforce the robustness and credibility of my research on social housing policies and practices in the Netherlands and Italy. Through transparent reporting and ethical considerations, I am confident that my study will contribute valuable insights to the field of housing and urban development.

Country	Home Ownership and Home Buyers	Rental Policies	Social Housing Policies	Housing Allowance
Italy				
Netherlands				
Grants	Loan	Fiscal	Guarantee	
Regulatory	Capital investment	Strategy		

Figure 19 Type of policies enforced for each of the four main categories of policies (PwC analysis based on ECSO deliverables)

Methodology

The methodology employed in this study for comparing social housing policies and practices in the Netherlands and Italy follows a side-by-side comparison approach. The analysis is conducted in a systematic, structured manner, allowing for a comprehensive evaluation of key aspects related to social housing. Firstly, the study explores the main concepts of social housing within the built environment, encompassing various types and theories of social housing programs. Subsequently, a thorough review of successful social housing programs and their impact is undertaken. This is followed by an examination of social housing from the perspective of various fields of study, with reference to notable research studies, articles, and journals. Historical research and key theoretical backgrounds are also considered in detail. The concept of social mix, defined within a historical context, is explored across five domains, with attention to associated theories and concepts, benefits, challenges, and implementation examples. A paradigm shift in social mix concepts and challenges in implementation is identified through historical research. The methodology further delves into specific case studies from different countries, such as the Netherlands and the United States, to illustrate outcomes and potential for development. The research studies within these case studies are reviewed and analyzed to draw valuable insights. Additionally, data and measurement techniques are employed, utilizing data sources and measurement techniques for rigorous analysis. This study provides a comprehensive overview of social housing policies and practices in both the

Netherlands and Italy, employing a systematic side-by-side comparison to draw meaningful lessons for the improved management of the built environment.

Overview of the Netherlands

Social Housing Policies and Practices in The Netherlands

The Netherlands stands as a model for successful social housing policies, demonstrating a robust commitment to providing affordable and accessible housing options for its residents. This section offers an in-depth overview of the country's social housing policies and practices, delving into the key instruments and strategies employed by the Dutch government to address housing challenges and foster social cohesion.



Figure 20 The Share of Social Housing -The state of housing in the EU (2019)

Key Social Housing Policies and Practices in the Netherlands

The Netherlands has long been recognized for its comprehensive and well-organized social and affordable housing systems. In this chapter, we delve into the specifics of social and affordable housing in the Netherlands, considering the definition, target groups, providers, trends, and the convergence or divergence with affordable housing.

Definition and Target Groups

Social housing in the Netherlands is designed to cater to individuals and families with low and low-middle incomes, as well as those with defined special needs. It serves as a cornerstone of the Dutch welfare state, ensuring that housing remains accessible to a broad range of the population. This emphasis on social housing has contributed to the country's reputation for strong social support.

Providers

Housing corporations with a more restricted mission are the primary providers of social housing in the Netherlands. These entities play a pivotal role in ensuring that affordable accommodation is available to those who need it. Housing corporations have historically been instrumental in shaping the Dutch housing landscape.

Trends

The Netherlands has experienced some shifts in the trends related to social housing. While the overall number of social housing units has seen a degree of stagnation, there has been a move towards stricter targeting in some high-pressure areas. This has resulted in an increase in the number of eligible applicants in these regions, reflecting the ongoing challenge of housing affordability.

Affordable Housing

An interesting development in the Netherlands is the emergence of affordable housing for former social housing tenants who have reached an upper-income level. This new segment represents a transition in the Dutch housing landscape, responding to the changing needs of tenants.

Convergence or Divergence

In the Netherlands, social housing continues to be a central component of the housing policy, and the government maintains a focus on both social and affordable housing. The convergence between these two segments is evident as the Dutch housing system strives to provide adequate housing options for various income groups.

Social Housing Policies: Ensuring Affordability and Stability

Central to the Dutch housing system are policies aimed at maintaining rent affordability and ensuring housing stability for tenants. Rent regulation serves as a fundamental pillar, setting maximum rent levels for qualifying dwellings. These regulations apply to housing units below a certain quality threshold and those with initial rents set below the specified boundary. The overarching goal of capping rents is to prevent excessive increases and shield tenants from the detrimental effects of volatile market fluctuations [57].

Moreover, the Netherlands' social housing system incorporates a housing allowance, commonly known as housing benefit, which functions as a financial safety net for low-income tenants. Eligible renters can receive housing benefit if their rent surpasses a certain portion of their income, thereby alleviating housing cost burdens and enhancing housing affordability for vulnerable households [58]

Additionally, the Dutch government actively fosters housing stability through tenure protection measures. Renters in the social housing sector are granted a degree of security through indefinite tenancy agreements, offering them long-term stability in their homes. This stability is vital in creating cohesive communities and nurturing a sense of belonging among residents [21].

The Role of Housing Associations: Driving Social Housing Provision

Housing associations play a pivotal role in the Dutch housing landscape, representing a major force in the provision of social housing. These nonprofit organizations own a substantial portion of rental homes, accounting for approximately 75% of the three

million rental units in the country. As part of their social mission, housing associations focus on providing affordable and well-maintained housing options for lower-income households [59].

A crucial aspect of social housing allocation is the income-based eligibility criteria. Housing associations follow strict guidelines, allocating the majority of their vacant social housing units to individuals or households with income levels below specified thresholds. This strategic approach prioritizes households with incomes up to €44,035 for single-person households and €48,625 for multi-person households, ensuring that those in need of affordable housing receive primary consideration [21].

Innovations and Sustainability in Social Housing

The success of the Dutch social housing system can also be attributed to innovative approaches and sustainable practices adopted by housing associations. In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on energy-efficient and environmentally-friendly housing solutions. Housing associations have embarked on initiatives to develop sustainable housing projects, incorporating energy-saving technologies, renewable energy sources, and green building materials. By embracing sustainability, the Dutch social housing system not only reduces its environmental footprint but also lowers utility costs for tenants, contributing to enhanced affordability and improved living conditions [60].

Furthermore, the concept of "social return on investment" has gained traction in the Dutch social housing sector. Housing associations have recognized the importance of investing in projects that yield social benefits beyond housing provision. These projects encompass community development initiatives, such as promoting social cohesion, supporting educational programs, and offering employment opportunities for residents. By focusing on holistic community development, the Dutch social housing system extends its impact beyond housing to foster thriving and inclusive neighborhoods [61] [62] [63].

Impact And Policy Context: The Need for Housing

The Netherlands' commitment to social housing has historically been lauded for its positive impact on housing affordability and social cohesion. By implementing rent regulation and providing housing allowance, the government fosters stable housing conditions, protecting tenants from unaffordable rent increases and potential homelessness. Moreover, housing associations' prominent role as providers of social housing showcases the potential of nonprofit organizations to contribute significantly to housing provision and community well-being [21] [58].

However, the Dutch social housing system also faces certain weaknesses. The Netherlands is experiencing a housing shortage attributed to factors like population growth and insufficient production of new housing. The overall housing shortage in 2020 was estimated at 331,000 dwellings, equivalent to 4.2% of the total housing stock. Major cities face deficits of over 6% in their current housing stock. By 2025, the housing shortfall is projected to reach 419,000 units, with disruptions expected. The waiting time for social housing allocation varies, with households in the Amsterdam region spending an average of approximately five-and-a-half years actively seeking social housing. Eligibility is determined by income caps, leaving a significant group of households unable to access affordable housing. The country lacks sufficient rental units below the affordability threshold, leaving many households in a precarious position. Building materials prices are experiencing a significant and rapid increase, with a year-on-year rise of nearly 25%. Building Holland conducted an investigation and pinpointed six specific products that are driving this price surge, exacerbated by certain companies stockpiling them, leading to market distortions [21] [14].

Energy and Renovation Landscape of Social Housing in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, social housing providers have been actively improving the energy performance of their housing stock. Over 50% of Dutch social housing now achieves high EPC ratings of A or B. The proportion of homes with the worst ratings (E, F, and G) has been decreasing annually, with 31,800 fewer such homes in 2022 compared to

the previous year. Notably, the latest national data highlight that the social housing sector outperforms the owner-occupied and private rental segments in terms of energy efficiency.

Regarding energy sources, natural gas boilers still dominate, with around 80% of social tenants relying on them. However, there's a transition underway, with 9% of social housing already heated through district heating, and heat pumps meeting 3% of heating needs. Additionally, 16.1% of social dwellings have solar panels installed on their roofs. [64]

Renovation and Construction Challenges:

The renovation of social housing in the Netherlands is progressing, with agreements to upgrade the worst-performing dwellings and phase out E, F, and G rated homes by 2030. Importantly, these renovations aim to keep rents affordable for tenants while reducing energy and heating costs. However, challenges include a shortage of skilled labor and the cost and time involved in renovations.

In terms of energy systems, supply and demand alignment remains an issue, with insufficient access to sustainable energy systems. The national electricity grid is also under strain due to increased electrification efforts. These factors create bottlenecks in adopting sustainable energy practices and transitioning away from gas.

Concerning new construction, agreements aim to build 250,000 new social homes by 2030 and 50,000 intermediate rental homes. Challenges include a shortage of available land, issues with land speculation, labor force, supply chain, and cost concerns. The slow permitting process has also been identified as a factor hindering the development of new social dwellings. [59]

the Netherlands' social housing sector is making strides in energy efficiency and renovation efforts, but challenges related to labor, energy systems, and land availability persist, impacting both renovation and new construction goals. These

complexities require careful consideration and strategic planning to ensure the long-term sustainability of social housing in the country. [47]

Insights and Lessons

The Netherlands' social housing policies and practices offer valuable insights and lessons for housing policymakers worldwide. Rent regulation and housing allowance exemplify effective mechanisms to uphold affordability and protect tenants from market volatility. Housing associations' prominent role as providers of social housing showcases the potential of nonprofit organizations to contribute significantly to housing provision and community well-being.

As the Dutch housing market continues to evolve, policymakers must remain vigilant in assessing the effectiveness of existing policies and adapting to changing societal and economic conditions. By adopting a flexible and proactive approach, countries can strive to create inclusive housing systems that prioritize the well-being and stability of their citizens.

Historical Background and Evolution of Social Housing

The development of social housing in the Netherlands has a rich historical context that reflects the country's economic and societal transformations over time. This section provides an in-depth overview of the key historical milestones, policy shifts, and recent developments in the Dutch social housing system. Understanding this historical trajectory is crucial for comprehending the evolution of social housing policies and their implications for the Dutch housing landscape.

Summary

Social housing in the Netherlands has undergone a significant transformation over the years, adapting to changing economic, social, and political contexts. This summary provides an overview of the historical progression of social housing in the Netherlands, highlighting key eras, institutional structures, financing mechanisms, regulations, and the target demographic, as outlined in the provided table.

Pre-1901: The First Housing Associations Before the Housing Act of 1901, the provision of social housing was characterized by "capitalist philanthropy." Private associations, often backed by wealthy shareholders, sold shares to finance housing initiatives. Members of these associations aimed to generate a return on investment, with any profits reinvested. This era primarily served the working-class population, focusing on the housing needs of disadvantaged groups.

1901–1945: Formalization with the Housing Act The introduction of the Housing Act in 1901 marked a formal shift in the approach to social housing. It required housing associations to be nonprofit and prohibited payments to shareholders. The Housing Act provided a framework for direct government construction loans with low-interest rates, and subsidies were made available to rejuvenate blighted neighborhoods. This era expanded the target demographic to include not only working-class individuals but also special groups like municipal housing companies.

1945–1965: Postwar Housing Shortage The postwar period saw the extension of government influence in social housing. The requirement of membership for unit allocation weakened, and the professionalization of housing associations took center stage. Housing associations were increasingly reliant on direct government construction loans and operating subsidies. Government intervention in determining the location, style, and quantity of housing units led to a loss of autonomy for housing associations. During this era, social housing aimed to serve virtually anyone in need.

1965–1989: Self-Sufficiency The self-sufficiency era marked a shift towards regaining operational autonomy, with private-sector financing becoming more prevalent. Rental assistance was introduced as a demand-side financing mechanism. The establishment of the WSW Guarantee Fund provided the means to guarantee loans from the private market. Government construction loans gradually diminished, first for renovations and then for new construction. The government established the CFV to oversee and report on the financial health of the social housing sector. The target demographic

remained broad, encompassing anyone in need of social housing. This era also saw the emergence of the first tenant unions.

1990–1995: Making Independent Municipal housing companies were privatized and merged with private housing associations during this era. An important aspect was the "Balancing Act," which involved the cancellation of outstanding debt and subsidies. Rental assistance for tenants on the demand side and the WSW Guarantee continued to support social housing. The government's regulatory power expanded to include rent setting and unit allocation. There was a shift in rhetoric towards focusing on "vulnerable groups."

1995–Today: The Modern System In recent years, mergers between housing associations have resulted in larger portfolios, enhancing efficiency. Housing associations transformed from member-based organizations to foundations with executive and advisory boards. Various incentives, such as discounted land prices and the WSW Guarantee, have been introduced to support social housing. Rental assistance remains a vital component on the demand side, while lower taxes have been introduced as non-profit incentives. Government regulation now encompasses quality, availability, and affordability, with biannual performance agreements ensuring accountability. Income limits, introduced in 2009, have narrowed the target demographic to approximately 40% of the population, with a specific focus on "vulnerable groups." The national tenant union, Woonbond, plays a prominent role in advocating for tenants' rights.

The evolution of social housing in the Netherlands reflects a dynamic interplay of changing economic, social, and political factors. From its roots in capitalist philanthropy to the modern, regulated system, the Netherlands has consistently worked to address housing needs, with a particular emphasis on ensuring affordability and social inclusion for its citizens. Understanding this evolution is crucial for comprehending the present-day social housing landscape in the Netherlands [65].

Origins and Early Developments

Social housing in the Netherlands can be traced back to the mid-19th century when it emerged as a private initiative to address the challenges posed by urbanization and industrialization. As the Dutch economy shifted from agriculture to industrialization, cities experienced a surge in population due to rural-to-urban migration [66]. This influx of people created a severe housing shortage, particularly for the growing workforce [67].

In response to these pressing social issues, early social housing initiatives were born, with one notable example being factory housing. These dwellings were purposefully built near industrial centers to accommodate workers and their families. Factory owners provided housing to stabilize the workforce and ensure that workers had suitable housing close to their workplaces, fostering a stable labor force [68].

However, the rapid pace of urbanization and the scale of housing challenges necessitated more comprehensive solutions. As the 20th century dawned, the political climate in the Netherlands began to shift, prompting the government to take a more active role in addressing societal housing issues [67].

The Role of the State in Social Housing

The early 20th century marked a significant turning point in social housing policy in the Netherlands. The government began taking a more interventionist approach by designating housing as a municipal responsibility. This marked the beginning of collaboration between the government and private forces, leading to the establishment of housing associations as nonprofit entities.

Housing associations played a crucial role in the semi-public system that developed over the years. They received subsidies from the government to construct and manage dwellings that aligned with state-defined conditions. These conditions ensured that the housing provided met certain quality and affordability standards, making it accessible to lower-income households [69].

The introduction of the Housing Act of 1901 formalized the construction of social housing and laid the foundation for a more organized approach to housing provision [70].

Privatization and Neoliberal Shift

In the mid-1990s, the Dutch social housing system underwent significant changes driven by the broader neoliberal agenda. As part of this shift, the government pursued a path of privatization, including that of housing associations. While housing associations had always operated as private entities, the privatization move financially decoupled them from direct government control. As a result, subsidies from the state to housing corporations were terminated, and in exchange, these corporations repaid their debts to the government.

Privatization granted housing corporations greater autonomy in decision-making regarding the types of dwellings they would construct and the segments of the population they would serve. This move was in line with the broader neoliberal philosophy, promoting more market-oriented solutions in various sectors. Despite this increased autonomy, housing corporations were obliged to continue providing social housing as part of their core function, ensuring that the principles of affordable and accessible housing for low-income households were maintained [62].

	1945	2012
Owner-occupied	28	60
Commercial + informal rented	60	9
Social rented	12	31
Total	100	100

Table 3 Changes in tenure, Dutch housing stock, 1945 and 2012 (%) (Boelhouwe, Priemus (2014))

Challenges and Future Planning

Looking ahead, the Dutch social housing system faces several challenges, including demographic changes, an aging population, and a decline in cohabiting couples among younger age groups. These changes require the adaptation of the existing housing stock and careful planning by social housing providers and the broader housing sector.

The average household size is expected to decrease from 2.22 people in 2010 to 2.14 people in 2021 and further to 2.07 in 2030. This demographic shift necessitates adjustments in housing design and allocation to meet the changing needs of households [71].

To address these challenges, the Dutch government is adopting more ambitious housing development targets for regions. These targets focus on planning capacity, housing production, and housing development for specific target groups [72]. One notable proposal involves granting housing corporations greater flexibility in providing housing for middle-income households, promoting more inclusive housing policies [21].

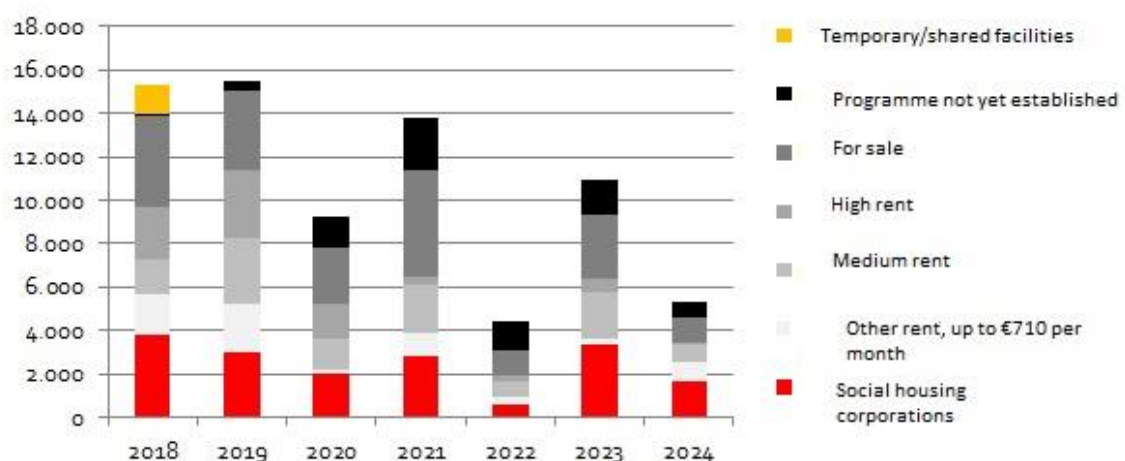


Figure 21 Overview of planned houses 2018-2024 (City of Amsterdam website)

In addition to these initiatives, there are proposals for a national land development agency to facilitate land availability for housing projects. This approach aims to ensure

that land is used efficiently and that housing developments are strategically planned to address housing shortages effectively.

The historical background of social housing in the Netherlands offers valuable insights for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners in the field of housing and urban development. By tracing the historical trajectory, we gain a comprehensive understanding of how social housing policies have evolved to address the changing needs of Dutch society. The challenges and successes experienced along this journey can inform contemporary policy design and implementation, guiding efforts to ensure access to quality and affordable housing for all segments of the population.

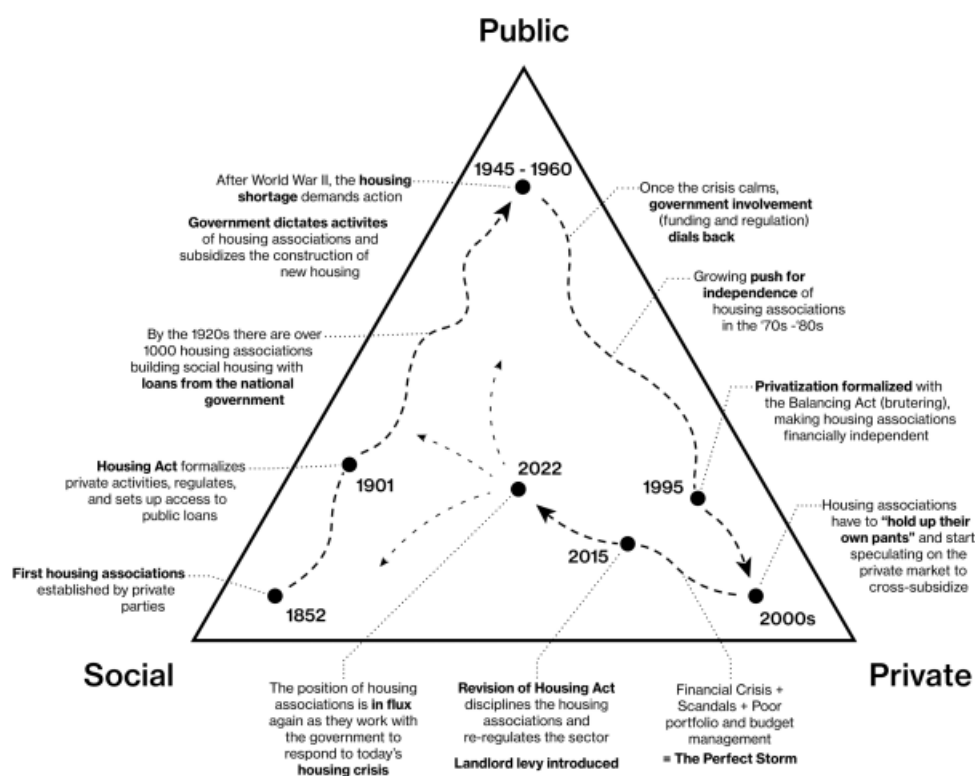


Figure 22 Mobile Institutional Position of Housing Associations Throughout History (Reinier van de Kuij, Adviseur Strategie [Strategy Advisor] for Havensteder, interviewed by Hanneke van Deursen, July 6, 2022)

Housing Stock According to the most recent Housing Europe publications

Housing Europe 2021

According to data from Housing Europe in 2021, the housing landscape in the Netherlands can be characterized by the following figures:

Housing Stock (2020):

- Total Housing Stock: 7,891,786 units
- Social Housing: 2,294,219 units (29.1%)
- Private Rental: 1,047,799 units (13.3%)
- Owner-Occupier: 4,517,921 units (57.2%)
- Unknown: 31,847 units (0.4%)

The majority of the housing stock is owner-occupied, accounting for 57.2% of the total. Social housing, which is rent-capped housing owned by Housing Corporations (Woningcorporatie), represents a significant portion at 29.1%. Private rental housing makes up 13.3% of the housing stock, while there is a small percentage categorized as unknown.

Supply and Renovation of Social Rental Housing (2013-2020):

- 2013: New Builds & Acquisitions - 36,566 units, Renovations & Rehabilitations - Not specified
- 2014: New Builds & Acquisitions - 20,678 units, Renovations & Rehabilitations - 29,400 units
- 2015: New Builds & Acquisitions - 24,821 units, Renovations & Rehabilitations - Not specified
- 2016: New Builds & Acquisitions - 19,612 units, Renovations & Rehabilitations - 50,800 units

- 2017: New Builds & Acquisitions - 21,405 units, Renovations & Rehabilitations - 39,600 units
- 2018: New Builds & Acquisitions - 19,069 units, Renovations & Rehabilitations - Not specified
- 2019: New Builds & Acquisitions - 19,926 units, Renovations & Rehabilitations - Not specified
- 2020: New Builds & Acquisitions - Not specified, Renovations & Rehabilitations - Not specified

The data provides insights into the supply and renovation activities in the social rental housing sector. Over the years, there have been varying numbers of new builds and acquisitions, indicating efforts to increase the social housing stock. Renovation and rehabilitation figures demonstrate the commitment to maintaining and upgrading existing social rental units.

The Netherlands' housing landscape in 2020 reveals a diverse mix of ownership structures, with a significant proportion of social housing managed by Housing Corporations. The data also highlights ongoing efforts in both new construction and renovation within the social rental sector, underscoring a commitment to addressing housing needs and ensuring the quality of social housing stock. [73]

[Housing Europe 2023](#)

In 2022, the Netherlands' housing landscape can be described as follows:

Housing Stock (2022, including vacant homes):

- Total Housing Stock: 8,045,850 units
- Social housing: 2,300,050 units (29%)
- Private rental: 1,134,450 units (14%)
- Owner-occupied: 1,134,450 units (57%)

- Other: 365,100 units (0.2%)

The housing stock in 2022 continues to show a significant portion of owner-occupied homes at 57%, while social housing accounts for 29% of the total. Private rental housing makes up 14%, and there is a small category designated as "Other."

Aedes is the sector association of social housing companies in the Netherlands, whose 262 members employ around 28,000 people. The members of Aedes are jointly responsible for approximately one third of all homes in the Netherlands.

This data from 2022 highlights the continued presence of social housing in the Dutch housing landscape and the role of sector associations like Aedes in managing a significant portion of the country's homes. [47]

Impact of the Pandemic on Construction and Maintenance

Prior to the pandemic, the Netherlands faced uncertainties related to Brexit, which particularly concerned the country's port and logistics sectors. The Dutch government implemented lockdown measures later than neighboring countries, with relatively less stringent restrictions during the summer months. Toward the end of 2020, as COVID-19 cases increased, stricter measures were introduced. Despite these challenges, the Netherlands managed a comparatively modest GDP decline of just over 4% in 2020, partly due to timely government interventions. Unemployment rates remained low, but a slight increase was expected in 2021.

In the construction sector, the pandemic's impact on housing completions was limited. Approximately 69,300 new homes were completed in 2020, a slight decrease from 2019. However, forward-looking indicators like housing permits signaled a more significant near-term decline in construction activity.

From a social housing perspective, members of Aedes, the Dutch federation of social housing companies, reported minimal disruptions to their development activities.

Over 20,000 new social dwellings were expected to be provided in 2020. While the first half of the year saw some caution in renovations due to the pandemic, effective solutions allowed these activities to continue with minimal interruption.

Social housing providers in the Netherlands transitioned to providing essential services for tenants online. Tenant satisfaction scores remained stable, indicating the success of this approach in meeting tenant needs.

Notably, even before the pandemic, Aedes had signed a new social rent agreement with the Dutch tenant association. This agreement introduced a mechanism for tenants facing financial difficulties to negotiate lower rents with their social housing providers. This system played a crucial role in protecting social tenants adversely affected by the COVID crisis.

Overall, the Netherlands' construction and social housing sectors demonstrated resilience and adaptability in response to the challenges posed by the pandemic, with effective government support and innovative solutions ensuring continued service provision and tenant satisfaction. [73] [74] [75]

In conclusion the Dutch social housing system stands as an exemplary model for providing affordable and inclusive housing solutions. Through its strong legal framework, innovative financing mechanisms, transparent governance structures, and targeted support for various vulnerable groups, the Netherlands has achieved an inclusive and sustainable social housing system. By embracing the Dutch model as an inspiring example, policymakers and practitioners worldwide can gain valuable insights to enhance their own social housing approaches, promoting affordability, accessibility, and social cohesion.

Recent Developments and Efforts to Address Housing Crisis

In more recent developments, the Dutch government has undertaken significant efforts to address the growing housing crisis and achieve its social housing goals. The

announcement of parliamentary elections in March 2021 led to the decision against submitting a national recovery plan [76]. However, the parliament expressed support for utilizing the "Recovery and Resilience Facility" to initiate a national housing insulation program, aiming to improve energy efficiency in the housing stock [77].



Figure 23 Protesters taking part in the 'March Against Vacancy' protest in Amsterdam. Photograph: Hollandse Hoogte/Rex/Shutterstock

To decarbonize the housing stock, social housing providers have taken the lead in replacing old heating installations with sustainable alternatives, adopting innovative solutions, and installing solar panels in approximately 250,000 homes. Additionally, advanced water heating, ventilation systems, improved insulation, windows, and roofs are being implemented to enhance energy efficiency and reduce environmental impact .

Recognizing the importance of affordable rents, the outgoing government allocated around €130 million in tax breaks for social housing providers. Additional funding of €200 million was designated to address homelessness, while a €450 million fund was established to invest in sustainable homes and enhance livability in cities and shrinking areas. The introduction of tax credits has also incentivized the construction and renovation of social housing, encouraging further investment in the sector [59].

In recent developments concerning social housing providers, a significant milestone has been reached with the repeal of the 'landlord levy' (Verhuurderheffing). This levy,

which imposed taxes on social housing providers, had been reducing their available capital for construction and renovation efforts. Notably, social housing providers had contributed nearly €14 billion in levies until its abolition earlier this year.

The signing of the National Performance Agreements marked a crucial step, aligning with the government's decision to eliminate the levy. However, the resolution of persistent challenges related to land, skilled labor, costs, and supply-chain issues remains imperative to ensure the successful implementation of these agreements. By addressing these issues, the housing sector aims to maximize the benefits derived from the lifting of the levy in the forthcoming years. [47]

Key Features of the Dutch Social Housing System

The Dutch social housing system is widely regarded as a model of success, providing affordable and quality housing to a diverse range of target groups. This section offers a comprehensive exploration of the key features of the Dutch social housing system, delving deeper into its legal framework, financing mechanisms, governance structures, and the specific target groups it aims to serve. Understanding these features is vital for appreciating the system's effectiveness, inclusivity, and the significant societal impact it generates.

Legal Framework: Ensuring Order and Responsibility

The Dutch social housing system rests upon a robust legal framework that ensures order, fairness, and accountability. The government has enacted a comprehensive set of laws and regulations governing the provision of social housing. These laws clearly define the roles and responsibilities of various actors within the social housing sector, including housing associations, local governments, and tenants.

The legal framework plays a crucial role in ensuring that housing associations cater to specific target groups, such as low-income households, the elderly, and people with disabilities. By providing clarity on these roles, the legal framework facilitates smooth cooperation among stakeholders and ensures that social housing is delivered

according to well-defined standards and objectives [70]. This commitment reflects the government's dedication to providing access to affordable housing for those in need, thereby contributing to social cohesion and a more equitable society [78]

Financing Mechanisms: Supporting Affordable Housing Initiatives

The Dutch social housing system relies on innovative financing mechanisms to sustain affordable housing initiatives [79]. The government plays a pivotal role in providing financial support for the development of affordable housing through the provision of subsidies and guarantees. These financial incentives empower housing associations to offer housing units at affordable rents to low-income households, thereby expanding access to decent housing for vulnerable populations [58].

In addition to government support, housing associations have access to low-cost loans from the Bank Nederlandse Gemeenten (BNG), a specialized bank that finances public sector organizations. These loans enable housing associations to fund construction projects and carry out maintenance activities, further bolstering the supply of social housing and improving the living conditions of residents [80]

Governance Structures: Ensuring Transparency and Accountability

Transparency and accountability are fundamental principles of the Dutch social housing system, and its governance structures are designed to uphold these values. Housing associations are obligated to publish annual reports that detail their activities and financial performance. These reports play a crucial role in providing transparency and insight into the operations of housing associations and their adherence to social housing objectives [41].

To ensure the integrity of the system, independent organizations conduct regular audits of housing associations, ensuring that their practices align with established guidelines and regulations. This scrutiny not only fosters greater transparency but also enhances the system's credibility and public trust [81].

Target Groups: Meeting Diverse Housing Needs

The Dutch social housing system caters to a diverse range of target groups, reflecting its commitment to inclusivity and addressing various housing needs. The primary target group consists of households with lower incomes, for whom the system provides cheaper rental housing. This group includes various vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, people with disabilities, immigrants, the homeless, itinerant communities, and asylum-seekers [63].

Housing associations also play a pivotal role in providing specialized housing for older individuals and people with disabilities [16]. Additionally, they contribute to the quality of life in neighborhoods and regions through investments in areas like care, student housing, and sustainability initiatives [82]. By addressing the unique needs of these diverse target groups, the Dutch social housing system fosters inclusive communities and social well-being [63].

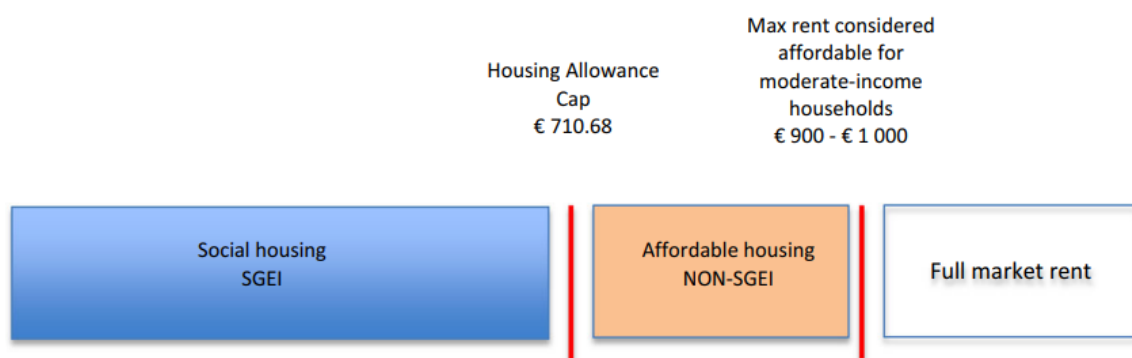


Figure 24 Affordable housing in the Dutch housing market (Czischke Ljubetic, D., & van Bortel, G. (2018))

Rent Control and Allocation Policies

In the Netherlands, both social and private housing can be rented, and certain rules and regulations apply to both tenants and landlords. These regulations cover aspects such as security of tenure, rent, rent increases, maintenance, and service charges. Low-income tenants in social housing are eligible for housing benefits if their rent exceeds a certain threshold. The government actively regulates rent levels in the social housing sector to ensure affordability for tenants [21].

Social housing is primarily provided by housing associations, which own around 75% of the 3 million rental homes in the country. These associations are responsible for letting social housing, which is defined as homes with an initial monthly rent below the rent limit for liberalized tenancy agreements in the private sector. The current limit in 2023 is €808.06. Housing associations are required to allocate 92.5% of their vacant social housing to individuals with incomes up to €44,035 (for one-person households) or €48,625 (for multi-person households), with a maximum of 7.5% allocated to those with higher incomes. In regions with a severe housing shortage, housing associations are permitted to allocate a higher percentage, up to 15%, through agreements with the municipality and tenant's association.

The concept of 'affordable' housing lacks a consistent and well-defined description in the Netherlands. Instead, various ad-hoc and local definitions of affordable housing are in circulation. Generally, local rental housing market segments are considered affordable, typically defined by the gap between the threshold of the social housing sector and the rent level that moderate-income households can still afford, especially if they do not wish to or are unable to purchase a home [21].

Rent Control and Tenancy Agreements

Tenancy agreements in the Dutch housing market can be either fixed-term or indefinite. Fixed-term agreements have a specified end date, while indefinite agreements have no predetermined end date. For fixed-term agreements of up to 2 years (for self-contained dwellings) or up to 5 years (for not self-contained dwellings), the tenancy automatically ends on the specified date if the agreement was entered into on or after July 1, 2016. However, tenants can also terminate the tenancy before the final date. For fixed-term agreements exceeding these timeframes or agreements entered into before July 1, 2016, the agreement is not temporary and can only be terminated if both the tenant and landlord agree, requiring written notice sent by registered post. [83]

In the private housing sector, which includes more expensive housing, tenancy agreements have been liberalized, allowing tenants and landlords greater freedom to negotiate rent and services. There is no maximum rent, and the rental value is not based on a points system. Only self-contained housing can be rented under these agreements, while housing that is not self-contained, such as rooms in a house, cannot [83].

Rent increases in the private sector are limited by law for a period of three years (from May 1, 2021, to May 1, 2024). The maximum annual rent increase is determined by inflation plus 1% or, starting in 2023, wage development plus 1% if the wage development is lower than inflation [84]. Disputes regarding rent increases can be brought before the Rent Tribunal (Huurcommissie) for resolution.

The Rent Tribunal (Huurcommissie) is a national, independent agency that mediates and adjudicates disputes between tenants and landlords concerning rent levels, maintenance, and service charges. It operates as an alternative, out-of-court dispute resolution service, providing information, mediation, and arbitration for housing-related issues. Proceedings at the Rent Tribunal require a fee of €25 for private individuals or €450 for companies or organizations [85].

A Points-Based System for Affordable Rental Housing

The Netherlands has been actively participating in the Housing2030 initiative, which focuses on various integral policy tools for affordable housing, effective governance, strategic land policy, housing investment, and the active promotion of climate-neutral and affordable housing and neighborhoods.

One of the notable practices in the Netherlands is the implementation of a points-based system to assess housing quality and determine the maximum price for renting it. This system primarily applies to the lower end of the market, which covers properties with rents under EUR 752 as of 2021. For properties above this threshold, rental rates are subject to market conditions.

The points-based system evaluates various aspects of a property, including the size of rooms, kitchen, bathroom, and energy performance. Each element is assigned points, and these points correspond to a specific rental amount in euros, typically around EUR 5 per point. This system helps regulate rental prices and ensures affordable housing for low-income households.

The lower end of the rental market in the Netherlands is primarily provided by social housing corporations, making up about 30 percent of the national housing stock. These properties are subject to a household income allocation ceiling of EUR 40,024 per year, as of 2021, and have an annually regulated indexed rent level. In contrast, the middle and upper segments of the private rental market, which are predominantly managed by private for-profit landlords, operate under a liberalized regime.

While the points-based system has proven effective in regulating rental prices and ensuring affordability for low-income households, it has also faced challenges, particularly during tight market conditions. In recent years, Dutch cities have experienced rapid price increases, which have been problematic for tenants. In response to this issue, housing legislation was amended in 2019 to grant Dutch municipalities the authority to establish additional rent regulations, providing more flexibility to address the evolving housing market conditions. [49]

A Holistic Approach to Social Housing

The Dutch social housing system indeed exemplifies a holistic approach to addressing housing challenges and promoting social welfare.

- **Strong legal framework:** The system rests upon a robust legal framework that ensures order, fairness, and accountability. The government has enacted a comprehensive set of laws and regulations governing the provision of social housing [70].
- **Innovative financing mechanisms:** The system relies on innovative financing mechanisms to sustain affordable housing initiatives. The government plays a

pivotal role in providing financial support for the development of affordable housing through the provision of subsidies and guarantees.

- **Transparent governance structures:** Transparency and accountability are fundamental principles of the Dutch social housing system, and its governance structures are designed to uphold these values. Housing associations are obligated to publish annual reports that detail their activities and financial performance.
- **Targeted support for various vulnerable groups:** The system caters to a diverse range of target groups, reflecting its commitment to inclusivity and addressing various housing needs. The primary target group consists of households with lower incomes, for whom the system provides cheaper rental housing.

Through these elements, the Netherlands has achieved an inclusive and sustainable social housing system. [79]

Decommodification and Scale: Unique Pillars of the Dutch Social Housing System

In addition to the previously discussed elements, the Dutch social housing system boasts other defining characteristics that contribute significantly to its remarkable success. One of these noteworthy features is decommodification, a strategic approach that involves retaining a substantial portion of the housing stock away from the open market. This practice serves a dual purpose: not only does it shield the housing stock from the tumultuous fluctuations of rising property prices but also fosters a sense of stability and security for the residents. This concept of decommodification is based on the idea that housing is a fundamental need rather than a mere commodity subjected to market whims. This safeguarding of a significant housing inventory from market-driven forces aligns with the broader social goal of providing reliable and affordable housing options for a diverse range of individuals and families [79] [68].

Furthermore, the Dutch social housing system stands out due to its remarkable scale. Unlike merely functioning as a safety net for those in dire need, social housing in the Netherlands has transcended into a mainstream housing choice. This integration of

social housing as a mainstream option is a remarkable achievement, resulting from years of deliberate policy decisions and strategic interventions. The system aims to cater not only to low-income households but also to a broader spectrum of society, including the elderly, people with disabilities, immigrants, the homeless, itinerant communities, and asylum-seekers [59]. By ensuring that social housing is not confined to emergency situations, the Dutch system fosters inclusivity and promotes social cohesion, creating a diverse and interconnected living environment [79].

These distinctive features—decommodification and scale—undoubtedly contribute to the allure of the Dutch social housing system as a captivating case study for nations worldwide grappling with the challenge of providing affordable and sustainable housing. The deliberate insulation of housing from the fluctuations of the real estate market and the successful integration of social housing into the broader housing fabric are two fundamental lessons that countries can draw inspiration from. As housing crises continue to affect various corners of the globe, the Dutch model stands as a testament to innovative thinking and a steadfast commitment to creating equitable living conditions for all, igniting interest and consideration among policymakers, urban planners, and housing advocates internationally. In the pursuit of enhanced housing accessibility and societal well-being, the Dutch social housing system offers invaluable insights and possibilities for transformative change on a global scale.

By embracing the Dutch model as an inspiring example, policymakers and practitioners worldwide can gain valuable insights to enhance their social housing approaches. The Dutch social housing system stands as a testament to the positive impact of a well-designed and comprehensive approach to social housing, promoting affordability, accessibility, and social cohesion.

Theoretical Foundations Shaping the Dutch Social Housing System

The Dutch social housing system stands as a captivating embodiment of the intricate interplay between a multitude of theoretical foundations that have profoundly shaped

its evolution. In scrutinizing the theoretical underpinnings that have propelled the Dutch social housing system, a more comprehensive understanding emerges, elucidating the multifaceted dynamics that have influenced its design and implementation. This section ventures deeper into the labyrinth of theoretical constructs that have indelibly marked the trajectory of the Dutch social housing landscape, encompassing welfare state theories, housing market theories, and the pivotal role of social equity principles.

Welfare State Theories: The Essence of Public Responsibility

The nucleus of the Dutch social housing system is intrinsically linked to the overarching principles of welfare state theories [86]. The Dutch Constitution, a cornerstone of the country's governance, explicitly enshrines the public authorities' duty to ensure the provision of adequate housing for its citizens. This constitutional affirmation underscores the deep-rooted commitment of the Dutch state to safeguarding the welfare and well-being of its populace [21]. However, the Dutch welfare regime has long perplexed conventional theoretical frameworks. It deviates from established norms by embodying a synthesis of paternalism and generosity that defies neat categorizations. This intricate blend of characteristics necessitates an enriched perspective that acknowledges the nuanced contours of the Dutch social housing milieu [86].

Housing Market Theories: A Struggle for Balance Amidst Scarcity

The Dutch social housing system grapples with a perennial reality – the stark scarcity of housing – which resonates profoundly with housing market theories. The Netherlands consistently confronts a scenario where the demand for housing consistently outpaces the available supply. This scarcity is a hallmark challenge, exacerbated in regions such as the bustling Randstad area (Netherlands Enterprise Agency, 2021). It is within this context of scarcity that the principles of housing market theories come to the fore. The urgency of addressing affordability issues for a diverse

array of societal segments underscores the pressing need for policies that negotiate the intricate equilibrium between demand and supply [87].

Social Equity Principles: The Mosaic of Inclusivity

The Dutch social housing system shines as a testament to its unswerving dedication to social equity principles. The burgeoning emphasis on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) strategies within Dutch society, predominantly spearheaded by larger international corporations, resonates with the very essence of the social housing model (Randstad, 2021). The evolving landscape of the Dutch society aligns seamlessly with the inclusivity aspirations of the housing system. By steadfastly focusing on providing equitable access to housing, the Dutch model endeavors to redress disparities and foster a more equitable and harmonious social fabric [88].

Government Intervention and Tenant Involvement: Dynamic Pillars

The bedrock of the Dutch social housing edifice is fortified by the historical continuum of government intervention. The proactive role of the Dutch government in provisioning affordable housing through diverse programs, notably the realm of social rental housing, stands as an exemplar of effective governance in housing. This robust governmental participation is intricately enmeshed within the fabric of welfare state theories, underscoring the nation's unwavering dedication to the welfare of its citizenry [89].

In this tapestry of influences, the vibrancy of the Dutch social housing milieu is further accentuated by the prominence of tenant involvement. Tenant organizations wield substantial influence, acting as conduits that amplify the voice of tenants, shape housing policies, and engender tenant-focused practices at various strata. This tenant-centric disposition ensures that housing management and maintenance are meticulously attuned to the needs, preferences, and aspirations of the residents.

To culminate, the Dutch social housing system stands as a vivid embodiment of the interplay between diverse theoretical underpinnings. The symphony of welfare state

theories, housing market dynamics, social equity imperatives, and active governmental involvement has coalesced to form a housing paradigm that is not only responsive and inclusive but also emblematic of a nation's resolute commitment to the betterment of its citizens.

Summary of Dutch Social Mix Policies and Procedures

This chapter offers an in-depth exploration of the policies and procedures implemented in the Netherlands to promote social mix within its social housing framework. Social mix in housing policies aims to achieve a balanced socio-economic composition of residents within urban neighborhoods. To understand these policies thoroughly, we will delve into their historical context, rationale, and potential impacts on urban development.

Historical Context: Urban Policy in the Netherlands

The historical evolution of urban policy in the Netherlands plays a pivotal role in understanding the foundation of Dutch social mix policies. For an extended period, the country's urban policy focused on enhancing disadvantaged urban districts. However, a significant transformation occurred over the past 13 years, shifting towards an area-based approach. This change was driven by concerns about the spatial concentration of low-income households, which policymakers regarded as a pressing issue. The solution to these challenges was the introduction of a housing mix in these areas, particularly through the "Magic Mix" Project. This project is notable for its efforts to promote diversity in housing, targeting a wide range of social groups, including students, young households, welfare dependents, and refugees.

The social rented housing stock in the Netherlands currently stands at around 30%, showing a gradual decrease over the last two decades. Traditionally, social housing was accessible to various income groups, including the middle class, and was provided by housing associations. However, a shift towards the residualization of the social rented sector, primarily serving low-income groups, has become more

pronounced. This change aligns with the broader trend of neoliberal restructuring in the welfare state since the 1990s.

In recent years, issues of housing affordability have gained prominence in the Netherlands, especially following the influx of refugees and asylum seekers in 2015. Welfare reforms and stricter allocation rules for social housing have exacerbated these challenges. To address these problems, housing associations started exploring solutions to accommodate a diverse range of social groups with varying lifestyles, ethnicities, and social conditions. This led to the concept of the "Magic Mix," representing a new typology of small-scale social housing initiatives, mainly on a temporary basis, emerging in several Dutch cities.

The idea of social mix has been a consistent theme in Dutch urban and housing policy, evolving in response to government priorities and different urban agendas. The notion of social mix has shifted from socioeconomic to ethnic terms, particularly as the concentration of ethnic minorities was perceived as detrimental to integration. Urban renewal programs and initiatives have played a significant role in achieving mixed post-war neighborhoods. [90] [34]

Case Studies of Social mix in the Netherlands: Main Features and Analysis

This part delves into case studies that exemplify the concept of "Magic Mix" in housing. Magic Mix refers to housing initiatives that intentionally combine different groups of residents with varying backgrounds to promote social inclusion and self-reliance. Two notable case studies, "Startblok Riekerhaven" and "Majella Wonen," are explored here, showcasing innovative approaches to inclusive housing.

[Startblok Riekerhaven](#)

Startblok Riekerhaven is a large-scale housing project, providing 565 dwellings, including 463 studios and 102 rooms in shared units. The tenancy duration is set at a maximum of five years. This initiative focuses on two distinct target groups: status-holders and Dutch students or workers aged 18 to 27. The project is a result of

collaboration between Housing association De Key, housing organization Socius Wonen, and the Municipality of Amsterdam, commencing in 2016.

Startblok Riekerhaven's unique characteristic lies in its physical setup. It comprises two or three-storey blocks of removable housing units where tenants are intentionally mixed door-to-door. One significant aspect is the expectation for renters to manage communal spaces and address liveability-related issues independently. This approach encourages interaction and cooperation among residents from diverse backgrounds, fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility.

Majella Wonen

Majella Wonen presents a distinct model with 70 social housing units. The tenancy duration for this project is limited to three years. Majella Wonen is divided into two segments, with 35 dwellings allocated to self-selected tenants from Portaal and 35 dwellings intended for vulnerable individuals associated with De Tussenvoorziening clients. This initiative is a joint effort between Housing association Portaal and the social service organization De Tussenvoorziening, commencing in mid-2016.

The characteristic that sets Majella Wonen apart is its focus on community guidance and support. The housing community actively assists vulnerable tenants in gaining self-reliance, making it a supportive environment. Similar to Startblok Riekerhaven, tenants here are also mixed door-to-door. This approach ensures that residents from different backgrounds interact closely, providing mutual support and fostering a sense of inclusivity.

Analysis and Significance

These case studies highlight the innovative approach of the "Magic Mix" concept in promoting inclusive housing. Startblok Riekerhaven's approach to mixing tenants door-to-door in a shared, self-managed environment emphasizes autonomy and responsibility among residents. This initiative showcases the potential of fostering community bonds among young individuals from diverse backgrounds.

On the other hand, Majella Wonen focuses on offering support and guidance to vulnerable tenants, emphasizing community involvement in the journey toward self-reliance. It provides a safe and supportive environment for individuals in need, underlining the importance of mixed housing models in addressing housing and social challenges.

The case studies of "Startblok Riekerhaven" and "Majella Wonen" exemplify the "Magic Mix" concept's potential in inclusive housing. These initiatives highlight the significance of mixing residents from diverse backgrounds, encouraging mutual support, and fostering a sense of shared responsibility. Their innovative characteristics serve as models for future inclusive housing projects, offering valuable insights for policymakers and housing providers seeking to promote social inclusion and self-reliance in housing initiatives. [34]

The Housing Mix as a Solution

Dutch social mix policies revolve around the concept of the housing mix. This idea is grounded in the belief that diversifying the socio-economic backgrounds of residents in a specific area can create a more balanced and socially cohesive community. The core notion is that by integrating residents from various socio-economic strata, social interaction and cohesion can be improved, potentially mitigating the challenges associated with concentrated [90].

Government Response to Immigration and Housing Shortages

The Dutch government's response to immigration and housing shortages is multifaceted. One critical aspect is measures designed to manage the influx of new asylum seekers while also cooperating with municipalities to provide additional housing places for asylum seekers with residence permits. This dual-pronged strategy alleviates pressure on overcrowded asylum seekers' centers and accelerates the integration of newcomers into Dutch society. This approach exemplifies the Netherlands' commitment to inclusivity [91]

Initiatives to Foster Diversity

Diversity in Dutch housing programs is promoted through a range of initiatives. These initiatives extend beyond simply allocating housing to asylum seekers; they also vigorously promote social mixing within disadvantaged urban districts. The overarching goal is to cultivate inclusive communities that can effectively accommodate diverse populations. These initiatives align with the government's broader strategy, which places inclusivity at its core, as it seeks to address the complex challenges posed by immigration and housing shortages [92].

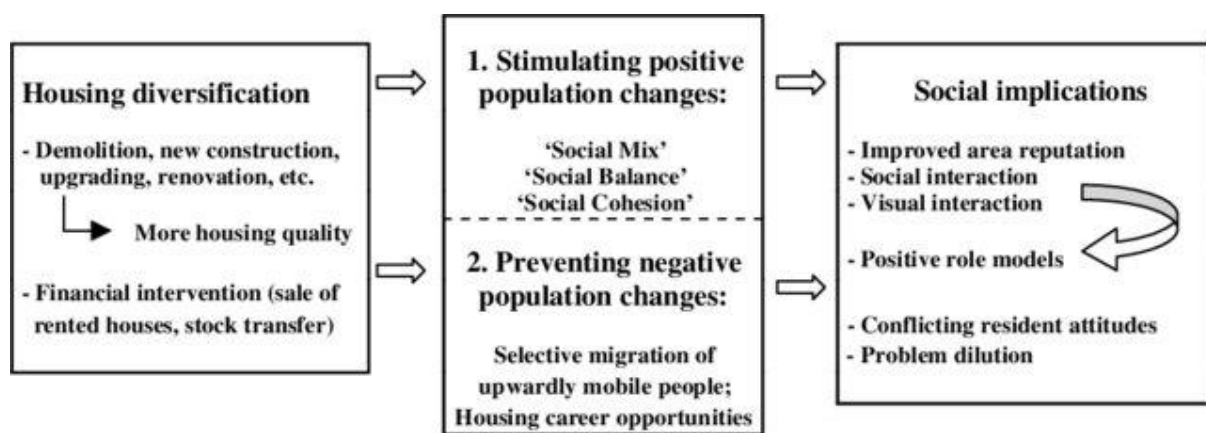


Figure 25 Assumed cause-and-effect relations of housing diversification (Reinout Kleinhans(2004))

Specific Programs, Incentives, and Regulations

The Dutch government has put in place specific programs, incentives, and regulations to achieve social mix. Notably, new housing developments are often required to incorporate a specified percentage of affordable housing units. Additionally, incentives are strategically provided to encourage the creation of mixed-income communities, reinforcing the government's commitment to social mix [93].

Challenges and Determination

Despite their resolute determination, Dutch authorities acknowledge challenges. One significant concern is the ongoing debate regarding the efficacy of social mix policies in addressing complex urban challenges. Furthermore, the concentration of lower-income tenants within the social housing sector remains a persistent challenge. This

not only raises sustainability concerns but also contributes to the formation of localized pockets of disadvantage. To surmount these challenges, Dutch authorities must rigorously assess policy impacts and make necessary adjustments, reflecting a commitment to continual improvement [94].

In conclusion, Dutch social mix policies and procedures revolve around promoting a housing mix in problematic urban areas to achieve social diversity and enhance social cohesion. However, the effectiveness of this approach remains a subject of ongoing debate, highlighting the complex nature of urban policy in the Netherlands. Housing associations play a pivotal role in providing housing solutions, including social housing and private sector housing, further shaping the outcomes of social mix policies (Aedes, 2016). These efforts serve as crucial steps towards addressing issues of poverty and inequality in disadvantaged areas.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Dutch Social Housing System

The Dutch social housing system is a unique model that has garnered both national and international acclaim for its approach to affordable housing. In this chapter, we embark on a comprehensive examination of the Dutch social housing system, delving into its strengths and weaknesses. Our analysis is based on an extensive body of existing literature and research studies. A thorough understanding of these aspects is essential for a nuanced evaluation of the system's performance and its potential for improvement.

Strengths

Extensive Social Sector

The most striking feature of the Dutch social housing system is its remarkable scale. It boasts the largest social housing sector in Europe, comprising approximately 29.1% of the total housing stock in 2020, with over 2.2 million units dedicated to social housing [14]. This extensive reach ensures that a substantial portion of the Dutch population has access to affordable and secure housing, making it an integral component of the

nation's urban fabric. This extensive provision is a testament to the Dutch government's unwavering commitment to housing welfare and social inclusion.

Emphasis on Affordability

Historically, the Dutch government has implemented two critical policy instruments to uphold the affordability of rental housing: rent regulation and housing allowance (Kemeny, 1995). These measures play a vital role in ensuring that low-income households have access to decent housing. In 2022, nearly 29% of housing in the Netherlands had rents below €763 per month, showcasing the tangible effectiveness of these policies (Van der Heijden, 2002). The Dutch emphasis on affordability aligns with their commitment to social equity in housing. Rent regulation and housing allowance schemes have provided a safety net for vulnerable households, safeguarding their access to housing amidst economic uncertainties [95] [96].

Decentralized System

A distinctive characteristic of the Dutch social housing system is its decentralization. It relies on a robust network of 284 non-profit housing associations, which are responsible for the construction, ownership, and management of social housing properties. This decentralization empowers these associations with a high degree of flexibility and adaptability. It allows them to tailor housing solutions to local needs and conditions, effectively addressing unique challenges faced by different communities. This localized approach fosters community integration and ensures that housing solutions are responsive to specific regional demands. [41]

Financial Self-Sufficiency

A noteworthy aspect of the Dutch social housing system is its financial self-sufficiency. Dutch housing associations operate without direct subsidies for their activities. They sustain their housing stock through a revolving fund generated by rental income and utilize long-term loans for construction projects. This financial self-sufficiency ensures the long-term viability and sustainability of the social housing sector. It not only reduces the burden on public finances but also fosters financial independence among

housing associations, enabling them to manage and maintain their properties effectively. This self-sufficiency model represents a resilient and adaptive approach to housing provision [41].

Weaknesses

Housing Shortage

Despite its strengths, the Dutch social housing system grapples with a significant housing shortage. Factors such as population growth and inadequate production of new housing units have contributed to this problem. In 2020, the housing shortage was estimated at 331,000 dwellings, equivalent to 4.2% of the total housing stock. Major cities face even more significant deficits in their housing stocks. This shortage not only poses challenges for those seeking affordable housing but also has wider societal implications, including potential barriers to labor mobility and economic growth. Addressing this shortage requires a concerted effort to increase the availability of "intermediate" housing for various income groups [14].

Eligibility and Waiting Times

Eligibility for social housing in the Netherlands is determined by income caps, leaving a substantial portion of households unable to access affordable housing. Additionally, the waiting time for social housing allocation varies, with households in the Amsterdam region spending an average of approximately five-and-a-half years actively seeking social housing . This situation highlights the need for reforms to enhance accessibility to affordable housing for a broader range of households. Long waiting times can lead to frustration and uncertainty for individuals and families in need of housing [97]

Price Increases and Supply Challenges

The Dutch housing market has faced challenges related to rising building materials prices and supply constraints. Building materials have experienced rapid price increases, leading to higher construction costs and potential affordability issues. Moreover, meeting the annual target of 27,000 new social housing units, as suggested

by research, has proven challenging. Supply challenges can exacerbate the existing housing shortage and hinder efforts to provide affordable housing to those in need [14].

Recent research conducted by the TNO research group has revealed a concerning increase in energy poverty between 2020 and 2022, affecting households across all tenures. The data shows that the number of households in energy poverty increased by 90,000 during this period, resulting in an estimated 600,000 households in the Netherlands living in energy poverty. TNO's estimates indicate that the costs associated with energy, including heating and electricity, have risen from €125 per month to €190 per month for the average household. Consequently, the energy poverty rate has surged from 9% in 2020 to 12.7% in 2022.

To address these rising living costs, the Dutch government has implemented certain measures. In 2022, each household received a €380 cashback from their electricity supplier. In 2023, price caps were established for gas, district heating, and electricity. The price cap for natural gas consumption up to 1,200 m³ is set at €1.45; for district heating, it is 37 GJ and €47.39 per GJ; and for electricity, it is 2,900 kWh and €0.40 per kWh. However, these price controls are presently effective only in 2023, leaving the situation for vulnerable households in 2024 uncertain.

Furthermore, social housing companies have taken proactive steps to mitigate the cost of living crisis. They have offered energy coaching to residents, providing guidance on operating heating and ventilation systems and proper ventilation techniques. Additionally, teams of technicians have been dispatched to install non-intrusive energy-saving measures, such as foil behind radiators, draught-stopping foam strips, and LED bulbs in dwellings. These renovations, particularly in the poorest-performing homes, are expected to reduce energy costs for many social tenants. Notably, social housing providers report an increase in tenants requesting thermal and efficiency renovations in their homes. These combined efforts aim to alleviate the

energy cost burden faced by households and promote energy efficiency in the housing sector. [47]

In summary, the Dutch social housing system exhibits several commendable strengths, including its extensive social sector, emphasis on affordability, decentralized structure, and financial self-sufficiency. Nevertheless, it is not without weaknesses, including a persistent housing shortage, eligibility and waiting time issues, and challenges related to rising prices and supply constraints.

Addressing these weaknesses requires ongoing research, policy innovation, and collaborative efforts to ensure the Dutch social housing system continues to provide equitable, accessible, and sustainable housing solutions for its diverse population.

Overview of Italy

- *(#Present a comprehensive overview of the social housing policies and practices in the Italy.*
- *Provide a historical background of social housing in the Italy, including significant milestones and policy developments.*
- *Describe the key features of the Italian social housing system, including eligibility criteria, rent regulations, tenant participation, and any unique aspects specific to Italy.*
- *Discuss the theoretical foundations that have shaped the Italian social housing system. This could involve exploring concepts like welfare state theories, housing market theories, and other possible theories and social equity principles that have influenced the design and implementation of social housing policies in the Italy.*
- *Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the Italian social housing system based on existing literature and studies.)*

Social Housing Policies and Practices in Italy

Italy's approach to social housing has undergone significant transformation over the years, reflecting changes in government policies, societal needs, and economic

conditions. This comprehensive overview of social housing policies and practices in Italy will provide an in-depth exploration of the historical evolution of social housing, the government's pivotal role in defining and implementing these policies, and the various types of social housing programs that exist. Moreover, it will delve into the complex interplay between public and private sectors and the challenges faced in ensuring affordable and accessible housing for all.

Key Social Housing Policies and Practices in Italy

Social and affordable housing are critical components of a nation's welfare policy, aimed at ensuring that its citizens have access to adequate and affordable shelter. In Italy, the provision of social and affordable housing has been a complex and evolving process that reflects the country's social and economic dynamics. This chapter delves into the landscape of social and affordable housing in Italy, considering its definition, target groups, providers, trends, and the convergence or divergence with affordable housing.

Definition and Target Groups

Social housing in Italy primarily targets individuals and families with low incomes and those with defined special needs. It serves as a vital safety net, ensuring that the most vulnerable members of society have access to stable and affordable accommodation. The Italian approach to social housing emphasizes the importance of providing housing for those who might otherwise be excluded from the private rental market.

Providers

The responsibility for providing social housing in Italy predominantly falls on local and regional authorities, with municipalities and regions, along with other sub-national level public entities, actively involved. This decentralized approach is rooted in the country's administrative structure, where significant autonomy is granted to regional and municipal authorities in housing matters. While this approach ensures

local responsiveness, it can also lead to disparities in the availability and quality of social housing across different regions.

Trends

In recent years, Italy has experienced stagnation in its social housing sector. Funding challenges, changing demographics, and shifts in policy priorities have all contributed to this stagnation. Despite this, there is a growing recognition of the need to address housing issues for low-income and vulnerable populations. As a result, some regions have been exploring innovative solutions to reinvigorate the sector.

Affordable Housing

The distinction between social and affordable housing in Italy is not always clear-cut. Affordable housing often targets middle-income individuals and families, with regional and local variations in the definition and criteria for eligibility. Housing funds, not-for-profit organizations, and other third-sector bodies play a crucial role in providing affordable housing options.

Convergence or Divergence

Italy has witnessed a divergence in its housing policies, with the government focusing more on affordable housing as social housing functions as a safety net for the most vulnerable. There is a need for more coordinated efforts to address the housing needs of various income groups effectively. [55]

Regulatory Framework in Italy

In Italy, the regulatory framework for social housing is established by the Decree of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport dated April 22, 2008. This decree defines the concept of "Alloggio Sociale" or social housing. Social housing refers to housing units and associated services designated for individuals and families facing socio-economic disadvantages, who are unable to access housing in the free market.

This definition encompasses housing units constructed or rehabilitated by both public and private operators. These housing units may be created with the aid of public

subsidies and contributions. Social housing units are intended for temporary leasing, with a minimum lease duration of eight years, at agreed-upon rental rates. Furthermore, they may also be made available for purchase at subsidized prices, falling within the domain of social private construction.

This regulatory framework serves as a pivotal component in addressing the housing needs of disadvantaged individuals and families in Italy. It encourages both public and private sector involvement in providing affordable and accessible housing options, thereby contributing to the welfare and stability of these marginalized communities. [98]

Types of Social Housing in Italy

Italy's social housing landscape comprises three primary categories, each with its own objectives and characteristics:

Subsidised Housing (edilizia sovvenzionata): This category includes housing units that receive financial support from the government to make them more affordable for low-income households. Government subsidies bridge the gap between market rent and affordable thresholds, ensuring that vulnerable populations have access to decent housing.

Assisted Housing (edilizia agevolata): These are housing units that benefit from various forms of government assistance, such as reduced interest rates on loans. This type of housing aims to provide support to individuals or families who may not qualify for fully subsidized housing but still require assistance to access affordable housing options.

Agreed Housing (edilizia convenzionata): Agreed housing refers to housing units that are subject to specific agreements between housing providers and local authorities to ensure affordability. These agreements often involve rent control mechanisms and income-based eligibility criteria, creating a sustainable approach to social housing [99] [100].

Influence of Political Decisions and Territorial Factors

Social housing policies in Italy have been significantly shaped by political changes, with varying approaches taken by different political coalitions. These changes have not only influenced the direction of social housing but have also led to alterations in spatial tools and housing forms, with distinct policies driving these shifts.

The geographical dimension plays a crucial role, notably the socio-economic disparities between the Northern and Southern regions of Italy, which impact housing needs and policy responses. Northern regions, being more economically developed, may require different social housing approaches compared to the Southern regions, where economic challenges often lead to greater demand for affordable housing. [99] [101].

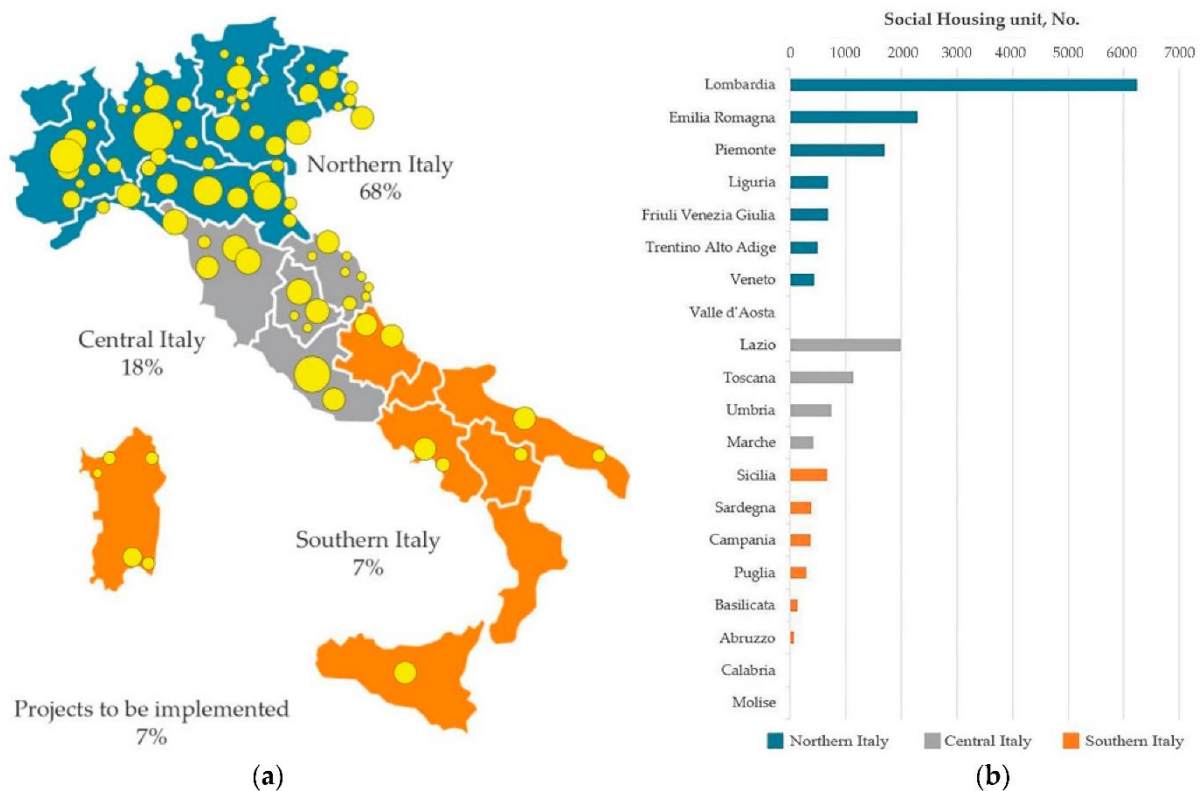


Figure 26 Territorial distribution of SH interventions financed by the FIA by geographical area (a) and of SH units by region (b) (source data: CDP Investimenti SGR, 2016).

Transforming Social Housing: Innovations and Challenges

In the past decade, Community Foundations and Housing cooperatives have played a crucial role in the sustainable development of new social housing communities in Italy. They have fostered innovative collaborations to promote and develop social housing projects. This is in response to the challenges faced by the traditional public housing model due to limited resources. It raises questions about the relevance of this model and its ability to address social inclusion needs.

In the early 21st century, Italy began to reconsider housing policies. This shift encompasses both a return to a time when housing was a focus of programming and political intervention and recognition of diverse housing demands that require tailored interventions. Social housing, known as "Edilizia Residenziale Pubblica," has evolved, involving cooperation between public, private, and social sectors through project financing models.

The Integrated Fund System is an ongoing experiment in Italy, representing a Private Public Partnership that combines privatization, financialization, and socialization in the housing sector. This model seeks to overcome market imperfections due to limited public resources and the difficulty for individuals to invest profitably.

The three dimensions of privatization, financialization, and socialization aim to produce economic, economic-financial, social, and cultural value. However, achieving social value requires careful consideration of real estate aspects, support for public welfare, and the promotion of housing policies.

Accountability of entities involved in providing public services is crucial in the financialization of services of general interest. The most effective partnerships involve local authorities and private entities with a public or philanthropic mission.

Housing policies in different European countries are challenging to compare due to the interconnected nature of welfare policies. European countries use two main models to ensure the right to housing: universalist and selective models.

Returning to Italy, there's a growing role for private social enterprises in integrated policies against marginalization. The industrialization of social entrepreneurship, focusing on standardization and optimization, can contribute to the creation and management of communities of inhabitants and social infrastructure.

Impact finance should be grounded in local needs and civilize market economies. Social entrepreneurship can industrialize the production of social value by meeting the demand for social impact investments, creating links between the public sector and local resources, and transforming local needs into services and urban infrastructure.

In summary, Italy is adapting its housing policies through innovative collaborations and public-private partnerships to address housing and social inclusion needs while ensuring accountability and social value creation. [102] [103] [104]

Collaborative Housing Models and the Role of Cooperatives

In recent years, Italy has witnessed a significant transformation in the realm of housing, as the European context grapples with increasing inequality and limited access to housing. This situation has been exacerbated by the weakening of housing policies, the impact of migrations on housing needs, and the resurgence of speculation in the housing market. In the absence of strong national programming, cities have taken the lead in addressing these emerging needs.

The United Nations Human Rights Council has emphasized the importance of treating access to housing as a fundamental right rather than a commodity. The 2016 New Urban Agenda has underscored the significance of housing in urban planning, shifting the focus from simply building structures to managing housing within a broader urban context, with people's rights to housing at the forefront.

These changing dynamics in housing have led to a parallel shift in living arrangements. Advanced social housing experiences in Italy and Europe have extended living concepts to include collaborative services and urban integration.

These trends align with the growing inclination towards collaborative attitudes in Italian society, which seeks to address challenges such as insecurity, precariousness, and fragmentation.

Cooperatives in Europe are experiencing a revival and adaptation to these societal changes. The European Parliament has recognized the importance of the collaborative economy, which overlaps with the principles of cooperation, such as community participation and peer-to-peer exchange. This collaborative economic model, leveraging digital technologies for resource sharing, is now being applied to housing solutions.

Across Europe, various urban development experiments, often promoted by cooperative communities, are contributing to post-welfare resilience. These entities take diverse forms and employ different strategies to create new pathways for urban development. They are introducing innovative social infrastructures and financial models to address the challenge of accessible housing amid reduced public funding, social segregation, and climate change.

Furthermore, inhabitants' cooperation is evolving to meet contemporary needs. Housing cooperatives have transitioned from focusing on constructing houses to accommodating the needs and life projects of their residents. These cooperatives have played a significant role in Italy's housing policies, contributing to the economy and welfare.

A notable innovation is the introduction of Social Management in public-private partnerships (PPPs) for social housing initiatives. This approach goes beyond providing simple rental apartments and emphasizes neighborhood development, community building, and the quality of housing. The role of the Social Manager is pivotal in coordinating these efforts, integrating various skills related to housing and social relationships. This Social Management model aims to contribute to social cohesion within urban contexts.

In conclusion, the housing landscape in Italy is undergoing significant changes, with a growing emphasis on the collaborative economy and the role of cooperatives in addressing housing challenges. These cooperative initiatives, coupled with innovative Social Management models, hold the potential to create inclusive, resilient communities in a shifting housing environment. [105]

The Role of Italian Cooperatives in Addressing Emerging Housing and Welfare Challenges.

In December 2019, during the National Seminar of the Alliance of Italian Cooperatives of Housing in Rome, several observations and potential future directions were discussed. Italian cooperatives play a significant role in providing social management services to various funds across different regions in Italy. This includes Lombardy, Piedmont, Tuscany, Parma, Friuli, with additional start-ups underway in Rome and Umbria.

Additionally, the Cooperation of Inhabitants collaborates with Public Administrations to promote innovative approaches to collaborative living and social inclusion, particularly in terms of environmental sustainability. Notable cases include Abitcoop Housing Cooperative in Modena, Andria Cooperativa di Habitanti in Emilia Romagna, Apulia Student Service Cooperativa, DAR=CASA housing cooperative, and others.

The emergence of social impact investments presents a new frontier for cooperatives. They aim to address the growing housing needs of urban populations and design new welfare infrastructures, creating measurable positive externalities. This places a priority on innovation and the adoption of tools for evaluating social impact, both by inhabitants and social cooperatives.

The need for tailored impact assessment tools is highlighted, encompassing various metrics, cost-benefit ratios, parameters related to public expenditure savings, user perceptions, counterfactual analysis, and more. The sociological perspective is

considered vital for a holistic understanding of social value in complex management systems.

Housing cooperatives are seen as key players with a rich tradition of mutual organization in Italy. They can guide policies, support public administration decisions, and facilitate impact finance to meet housing and service demands. Collaborative Housing is closely linked to welfare challenges, allocation of real estate assets for social infrastructure, and urban regeneration, making housing cooperatives essential partners for addressing affordable housing and welfare services with the necessary expertise.

In summary, the text discusses the role of Italian cooperatives in social housing and their potential to address emerging housing and welfare challenges through innovative approaches and social impact investments. [106] [107]

Shift Towards a Neo-Liberal Approach

In recent years, the definition of social housing in Italy has become more complex, encompassing a mixture of public and private practices that extend to both rental housing and home ownership. This evolving concept reflects a transition from a welfare-oriented approach to a more neo-liberal perspective on social housing.

As the boundaries between public and private sectors blur, it raises questions about the future trajectory of social housing in Italy. While this shift has brought about increased diversity and flexibility in housing options, it has also raised concerns about long-term affordability and social inclusivity [99] [101] [108]

Government Initiatives and Non-Profit Organizations

To address the ongoing issue of affordable housing, the Italian government has introduced several measures. For instance, the "Housing Plan" launched in 2009 aimed to boost the supply of affordable rental housing through public-private partnerships (Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, 2009). This initiative provided funding for

the construction or renovation of social rental housing units and offered incentives to private developers for building affordable rental properties [99] [109].

Within the framework of social housing in Italy, for instance the government has introduced various initiatives aimed at facilitating access to rented properties for vulnerable individuals and families. Notably, the Italian government established the National Fund, a pivotal program designed to support access to rented properties. This initiative is characterized by a subsidy structure that effectively bridges the gap between social housing rent and the actual rent paid by beneficiaries for their dwellings. For the period spanning 2017 to 2019, the National Fund is allocated an impressive EUR 90 million to facilitate its mission. This subsidy structure plays a crucial role in ensuring affordable housing options for those in need. In addition to this, other European countries have also implemented similar support systems, such as Luxembourg, where the Ministry of Housing increased its support to tenants by offering subsidies to households facing rent burdens exceeding a specific percentage of their disposable income. The conditions for eligibility have evolved over time to further simplify access, benefitting households facing high rental costs. These initiatives collectively contribute to addressing the challenges in the housing sector while improving access to affordable and sustainable housing options. [110]

Complementing government efforts, non-profit organizations like Fondazione Housing Sociale play a vital role in promoting affordable housing development. They offer technical assistance and financial support to local authorities and non-profit organizations involved in affordable housing projects [65](Fondazione Housing Sociale, n.d.).

Navigating the Energy Efficiency Landscape

Energy in the Existing Stock:

The energy efficiency landscape in Italy is characterized by a significant number of residential buildings falling into energy classes F and G, indicating relatively poor energy efficiency. While there is limited information available on different types of

housing stock, public rental housing (ERP) accounts for approximately 3.5% of the total housing stock, with around 900,000 units managed by public housing companies and municipalities. Despite the lack of centralized data on energy performance, there is a widespread need for the renovation of public housing units, with an estimated 10% of the stock currently vacant. Additionally, housing cooperatives, which consist mainly of multifamily buildings, tend to have lower energy scores but prioritize maintenance and energy retrofitting compared to national averages for condominiums. A small, relatively new social housing sector, supported by the Housing Investment Fund (FIA), comprises 7,500 units, with the majority in good energy performance condition. Energy communities are emerging as well.

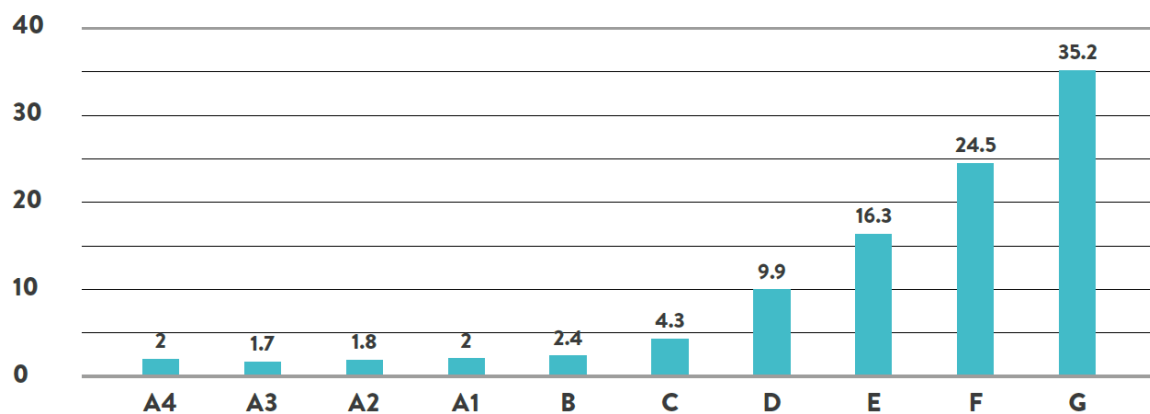


Figure 27 Share of residential building by EPC class, 2022 (Sistema Informativo sugli Attestati di Prestazione Energetica (SIAPE))

Renovation and Construction Issues:

A survey reveals that approximately 15% of cooperative-owned units are undergoing renovation, with an estimated investment of 180 million euros. These units were mostly in energy class F before renovation, and the refurbishment is expected to lead to significant energy and carbon savings. Fiscal incentives for energy refurbishment have been substantial, but the focus has primarily been on privately owned homes rather than social housing. Cooperatives are now leveraging available incentives, including the 'Superbonus 110%' measure. In addition, the Plan for Housing Quality (PINQUA) aims to rehabilitate part of the public housing stock. Currently, there are

no national funding programs for new construction through public-private partnerships (PPPs), but regional funding opportunities exist.

Cost of Living Crisis

While the effects of increasing prices are not yet quantified, residents in cooperative housing are concerned about sustaining rising costs, especially regarding energy expenses. The share of households with arrears on housing payments remains low but has increased slightly due to rising energy costs. Many cooperatives are implementing measures to help their members cope with the financial challenges. Additionally, there are government measures to assist the population in covering rising energy costs, including bonuses for individuals with low incomes. [111] [47]

Challenges and Future Directions

While Italy has made strides in addressing housing distress, challenges remain. The blurring of lines between public and private sectors in social housing raises concerns about accountability and long-term affordability. Ensuring that the private sector's involvement in social housing does not compromise the principles of accessibility and affordability remains a challenge.

Moreover, as Italy grapples with housing issues in an ever-changing economic and political landscape, it is imperative to consider the potential future directions of its social housing policies. This includes ongoing debates about the appropriate balance between public and private involvement, the role of housing as a social right, and the integration of sustainability principles into social housing initiatives.

A Public-Private Partnership Model for Social Housing - The Case of the Parma Social Housing Fund

Parma Social Housing Fund, represents an innovative approach to addressing the housing needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the Parma region. This fund operates within the broader framework of the FIA investment fund for housing, which aims to facilitate local social housing initiatives. The focus is on coordinating

these initiatives through public housing policies rather than managing them at the national level. The FIA investment funds bring together various stakeholders from the public, private, and third sectors to respond to the growing housing shortage.

Description of the Program

The Parma Social House program aims to address the pressing housing needs of various social groups in the Parma region. These groups include immigrants, students, workers, single-parent families, young couples, and the elderly. Approximately 1,700 families have sought social rented housing, with 1,500 of them still in need of affordable housing options. These families are willing to allocate a significant portion of their income, around 25%, or 545 euros per month, to secure suitable housing.

Housing challenges extend beyond vulnerable groups. Some families who own their homes wish to transfer to other dwellings but face financial constraints, as market prices can be prohibitive. Additionally, tenants who desire homeownership represent another segment of the population. They are willing to pay 245,000 Euros for a flat with mortgage repayments that correspond to 27% of their incomes.

To address these diverse housing needs, the Parma Social House program has proposed investment initiatives that provide a mix of housing types across seven different areas identified and assigned by the municipality. These initiatives involve the construction of 852 dwellings, tailored to the specific requirements of different user groups. The program's goals include promoting social cohesion, reducing social exclusion, and enhancing the sense of community belonging. In addition to social aspects, the program also emphasizes flexibility, energy efficiency, environmental protection, and reducing maintenance costs through durable and efficient construction.

Economic and Financial Dimensions

An in-depth analysis of critical variables has been conducted to evaluate the economic and financial viability of the investment. This analysis considers the ability of the

program to generate returns that support debt repayment. Three different scenarios were constructed to assess the financial sustainability of the program. The base scenario indicated a 4.4% rate of return, which was less than the cost of debt. To enhance the financial viability, alternative scenarios were developed.

In the first scenario, cost reductions without compromising quality and performance were considered, resulting in a 0.5% increase in returns. The second scenario explored the possibility of tax exemptions granted by the municipality, resulting in another 0.5% increase in returns. The third scenario assumed support from the municipality of Parma through contributions to the property fund, leading to a 1.6% increase in returns. These scenarios aimed to reach the target return of 7%.

Financial Resources and Structuring of the Parma Social Housing Fund

Various stakeholders have participated in creating and managing the Parma Social House Fund. These include banks, institutional investors interested in socio-economic aspects, and institutional investors seeking returns. The financing structure of the program involves equity commitments, debt financing from banks, contributions from institutional investors, and support from the National Fund.

The property is divided into different share classes, each offering varying administrative and proprietary rights to cater to the expectations and interests of different investors. This diversified approach allows the program to balance financial sustainability and social benefits effectively.

In summary, the Parma Social Housing Fund represents an innovative and comprehensive approach to addressing housing challenges, involving a diverse group of stakeholders, flexible financing structures, and a focus on both economic and social outcomes. It sets an example for future social housing initiatives in Italy and other regions. [112] [113]

Unlocking Housing Solutions: Challenges, Progress, and Prospects

The need for housing in Italy is a multifaceted challenge. While the country boasts a relatively high number of dwellings per inhabitant [114], experts predict that, at the current construction pace, only 1.2 million housing units will be produced over the next decade, falling short by 500,000 units to meet the demand generated by new household formation [115]. The social housing sector, which represents less than 4% of the total housing stock, leaves approximately one million households outside its reach, experiencing housing deprivation. While the direct impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on housing outcomes is yet to be fully documented, the adverse economic effects, including a 7% decrease in incomes from Q3 2019 to Q3 2020, are expected to increase the demand for social housing in the near future [116]. Notably, there has been a notable surge in rent arrears among households in the private rental sector, rising from 9% to 24% in just one year, with concerns that this figure could further escalate to 40% in 2021. Similarly, the proportion of households with arrears on mortgage payments surged from 4.1% to 11.9% during the pandemic [117]. Beyond addressing these pressing issues, there's an emerging demand for housing for students and youth, as well as innovative housing solutions for the elderly, including intergenerational and co-housing. Recent housing developments in Italy are promising. The country has advocated for stronger EU intervention and is set to be a top beneficiary of funding from the Next Generation EU initiative. The draft national recovery and resilience plan includes a 'Safe, green, and social' program dedicated to public housing, with an allocation of 2 billion Euros. This funding is intended for the requalification of the existing public housing stock, including energy retrofits (upgrading from class G to E) and anti-seismic measures, which would enable the renovation of about one-fifth of the entire public housing stock. The plan also opens avenues for financing projects related to urban renewal and the expansion of social affordable housing units, as well as student housing. In addition to these measures, Italy introduced the 'Superbonus 110%' in July 2020 to promote energy retrofitting, anti-seismic renovations, the installation of photovoltaic panels, and electric car

charging infrastructure. This measure allows beneficiaries to deduct 110% of their expenses for these works from their income taxes and extends to various stakeholders, including private households, condominiums, cooperatives, public providers, NGOs, and associations. Further enhancing housing quality, a 'national program to enhance housing quality' allocated over 853 million euros for the period 2020-2030, providing funding opportunities for regions, municipalities, and metropolitan areas. Notably, an additional 50 million euros were added to the Fund for rent arrears for the year 2021, initially established in 2013, to support households facing financial hardship. These measures signal a commitment to improving housing conditions in Italy, addressing current challenges, and preparing for future housing needs [73].

In conclusion, Italy's social housing landscape has undergone a series of transformations, from its origins after World War II to its contemporary multifaceted form. Government policies and the interplay between public and private sectors have played a crucial role in shaping the country's approach to social housing. While progress has been made in addressing housing distress, challenges persist, and the evolving definition of social housing raises important questions about its future direction. This nuanced understanding of Italy's social housing policies and practices is integral to comprehending its housing dynamics and informing future policy decisions [118].

Historical Background and Evolution of Social Housing

The history of social housing in Italy is a captivating narrative marked by significant milestones and an ever-evolving policy landscape. This journey reflects Italy's dynamic approach to housing its citizens, mirroring shifts in political ideologies, societal needs, and economic realities. In this section, we delve deeper into the historical context of Italy's social housing, shedding light on pivotal moments and key

policy shifts, and analyze how these developments have influenced Italy's contemporary approach to housing.

Early Foundations: The Luzzati Law and Pre-World War II Era

Italy's venture into social housing has deep roots, dating back to the early 20th century with the introduction of the "Luzzati Law" (Law 251/1903). This groundbreaking legislation, spearheaded by MP Luzzati, laid the foundational principles of social housing in Italy. It established intermediary entities like financial companies and cooperatives entrusted with constructing dwellings designated for rent or sale, primarily catering to those grappling with housing needs [99].

Building upon this early framework, Italy saw the enactment of two significant housing codes in 1908 (R.D. 89/1908) and 1919 (R.D. 2319/1919), collectively known as the "Testo Unico delle leggi per le case popolari e l'industria edilizia". These codes mandated municipalities to take on the responsibility of developing housing infrastructure, often backed by tax incentives aimed at supporting economically disadvantaged workers in accessing housing. These early legislative measures set the stage for Italy's subsequent housing policies, underscoring the nation's early commitment to addressing housing disparities [99]

Metamorphosis of Social Housing in Italy: From ERP to Inclusive Housing Policies

The concept of social housing in Italy has undergone significant evolution since its inception after World War II, when it was primarily associated with 'residential public buildings' (edilizia residenziale pubblica, ERP). Over time, this definition broadened to encompass housing initiatives aimed at addressing diverse housing needs with a social focus. This shift in perspective reflects a changing understanding of housing as a fundamental social right.

In 2008, the Italian government officially defined social housing, recognizing it as a multifaceted concept that includes various categories of dwellings, including rental housing and home ownership. The overarching goal of social housing, as defined by

the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport in 2008, is to alleviate housing distress and provide housing opportunities to families and individuals who cannot access the free-market housing sector. This definition marked a pivotal moment, offering a comprehensive framework for the country's housing policy, and reflecting the evolving socio-economic landscape [99] [100].

Evolution of Social Housing: Changing Definitions and Policy Paradigms

The definition of social housing in Italy has undergone a profound evolution over the years, closely reflecting the nation's shifting societal perspectives and policy paradigms. Initially grounded in a welfare-oriented approach, Italy's approach to social housing gradually shifted towards a more neo-liberal perspective. This transformation not only influenced how social housing was defined but also triggered significant changes in the spatial tools and housing forms employed.

Geographically, Italy's social housing policies had to adapt to address regional disparities, especially the socio-economic divide between the affluent North and the less prosperous South of the country. These regional differences necessitated tailored housing policies to cater to the unique needs and challenges faced by various parts of Italy. As the economic and social landscape evolved, so did Italy's approach to housing, reflecting a commitment to adaptability and inclusivity. [99]

Official Definition and Contemporary Landscape

A landmark moment in Italy's social housing journey occurred in 2008 when the national government officially provided a definition of social housing (D.M. 22/04/2008). This definition represented a significant milestone, offering a comprehensive framework for the country's housing policy. It expanded the scope of social housing to encompass various categories of dwellings, including both rental housing and home ownership, with the overarching goal of reducing housing distress and achieving a social mix. Notably, this definition deliberately omitted specific beneficiary criteria, allowing for a more adaptable and inclusive approach to social housing initiatives.

In contemporary Italy, the concept of social housing has evolved into a complex mosaic of public and private practices, encompassing both rental housing and home ownership, facilitated by intricate financial instruments. Social rental housing now constitutes approximately 5.5% of the national housing stock, affirming the enduring relevance of affordable housing. [99] [119]

The DPCM 16 luglio 2009 and DPCM 10 luglio 2012 - Enabling the National Housing Building Plan

The DPCM 16 luglio 2009 and DPCM 10 luglio 2012, published in Gazzetta Ufficiale on 19/2/2013, are instrumental in defining the regulatory and operational framework of the National Housing Building Plan, known as the "Piano Nazionale Edilizia Abitativa." This plan plays a pivotal role within the Integrated System of Real Estate Funds, facilitating the effective utilization of funds for housing development. Among the notable provisions, these decrees lay down the destination of investments, directing them toward augmenting the Social Housing offer, an essential step in addressing housing disparities among disadvantaged groups. Furthermore, these regulations emphasize the performance objectives and economic sustainability of housing projects, ensuring that investments yield long-term benefits. They also establish clear participation criteria for national funds in local investments, fostering collaboration and synergies at regional and local levels. Importantly, the decrees emphasize the need for integration with local public policies, creating a cohesive approach to housing development that aligns with the broader goals of regional and national authorities. [120]

Recent Developments and Commitment to Affordable Housing

Recent housing developments in Italy showcase the country's commitment to stronger EU intervention and its position as a top beneficiary of funding from Next Generation EU. The draft national recovery and resilience plan outline a dedicated "Safe, Green, and Social" Program, with a substantial budget allocated for public housing. This funding will be utilized for the requalification of existing public housing,

encompassing energy retrofitting and anti-seismic measures, aiming to renovate approximately 20% of the entire public housing stock. Additionally, the plan allows for funding projects focused on urban renewal, the expansion of social affordable housing units, and the development of student housing.

In July 2020, Italy implemented a new measure known as the "Superbonus 110%." This measure supports energy retrofitting, anti-seismic renovations, and the installation of photovoltaic panels and electric vehicle structures/chargers. It enables beneficiaries, including private households, condominiums, cooperatives, public providers, and NGOs/associations, to deduct 110% of the expenditure incurred for the mentioned works from their income taxes. The recovery plan includes provisions for extending this measure. [99] [55] [121]

Supporting Refugees and Integration

In addition to the measures outlined in the recovery plan, housing cooperatives and organizations involved in social services are currently collaborating to support the integration of refugees from Ukraine. They are focusing their efforts on regions with significant migration patterns, such as Emilia Romagna, Lombardy, and Piedmont. These regions are receiving special attention in terms of providing accommodation and assistance to incoming refugees. [14]

Housing Stock According to the most recent Housing Europe publications

Housing Europe 2021

The housing stock in Italy, as of 2011, was characterized by a total of 24,611,766 occupied units. This data was sourced from the Istat 2011 Population and Housing Census. The housing stock was divided into four primary categories:

1. **Social Housing:** In 2011, Italy had 954,161 social housing units, accounting for approximately 3.8% of the total housing stock. Social housing provides affordable housing options to low-income individuals and families.

2. **Private Rental:** The private rental category included 3,468,141 units, making up about 14% of the total housing stock. These properties were owned by private individuals or companies and rented out to tenants.
3. **Owner-Occupier:** The majority, approximately 72%, of the housing stock in Italy was owner-occupied, with 17,691,895 units owned and occupied by the residents themselves.
4. **Other:** The "Other" category included various housing arrangements that didn't fit into the above categories. This category constituted about 10% of the total housing stock and included vacant properties, holiday homes, and other non-standard housing arrangements.

Supply and Renovation of Social Rental Housing (2013-2017) During the years 2013 to 2017, Italy saw activity in the supply and renovation of social rental housing:

- In 2013, the number of new social rental housing builds was not available (na), but 4,557 units underwent renovation.
- In 2014, new builds remained unspecified (na), and there were 1,111 units that underwent renovation.
- In 2015, new builds were not reported (na), while 11,423 units were renovated and rehabilitated.
- In 2016, 1,204 new social rental housing units were constructed, and 3,437 units were renovated.
- In 2017, the number of new builds was not available (na), but 6,578 units underwent renovation and rehabilitation. Additionally, 1,578 units were subject to this process.

These statistics provided insights into the activity within the social rental housing sector in Italy during this period, indicating both new construction and renovation efforts to improve the quality and availability of social housing. [73]

In 2023, Italy's housing situation has evolved, with new data indicating the following:

- The total housing stock (occupied dwellings) has increased to 25,690,057.
- The proportion of public rental housing in the total housing stock stands at 3.5%.
- The tenures are divided as follows:
 - Owner-occupied: 19,432,745 units (76.7%)
 - Rent: 4,306,112 units (17%)
 - Other: 1,607,666 units (6.3%)

This data is sourced from the Istat Population and Housing Census of 2021.

Related Housing Organizations In Italy, there are several organizations involved in the housing sector:

- **Federcasa:** An association bringing together 144 public housing companies and housing bodies at the provincial, communal, and regional level, providing over 850,000 social dwellings.
- **The Alliance of Italian Cooperatives in the Housing Sector:** This organization represents housing cooperatives and their consortia in Italy, bringing together 4,700 cooperatives with about 550,000 registered members.
- **Fondazione Housing Sociale:** A private, non-profit entity whose mission is to experiment with innovative solutions for planning, financing, building, and managing social housing initiatives.

These organizations play significant roles in the development and management of housing in Italy.

The formation of a national Committee for Social Housing aims to create synergies across sectors and develop integrated projects that combine public and affordable housing. This collaborative effort seeks to address the increasing demand for social and affordable housing in Italy [47].

Impact of the Pandemic on Construction and Maintenance

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on Italy, being one of the first European countries to experience the virus's spread. This impact extended to the construction and maintenance sector, with significant consequences for the housing landscape. Here's a summary of the key points as of 2021:

1. Economic Contraction and Employment: Italy's economy was severely affected by the pandemic, leading to a 9.9% contraction in GDP in 2020. Unemployment rates also surged from 9.9% in 2020 to an expected 11.6% in 2021. This economic strain had repercussions on housing and construction.

2. Construction Sector: Italy's construction sector bore a substantial blow due to strict lockdown measures. Between February and April 2020, the construction growth rate plummeted by 70%, marking the most substantial decline in the EU. Unfortunately, official statistics for the remainder of the year are not available. This setback had implications for the construction of new social housing units and maintenance activities.

3. Impact on Social Housing: The COVID-19 emergency caused delays in the construction of new public housing, resulting in approximately 10% fewer units built in 2020 than initially expected. Renovation and extraordinary maintenance activities experienced an even more substantial impact, with an estimated 20% fewer units renovated than planned. Despite the implementation of specific COVID-19 protocols and collaboration between public housing companies and contractors to ensure safe construction sites, the delays persisted. Additionally, adhering to safety measures

incurred additional costs, equivalent to around 3% of the budgeted amount for each contract.

Measures to Support Tenants:

- **Rent Payment Suspensions:** During the initial wave of the pandemic (April to June 2020), rent payments in public social housing were temporarily suspended for households where one or more members had to stop working or became unemployed. This measure also applied to certain commercial premises.
- **Instalment Plans and Eviction Suspensions:** To support tenants who accumulated rent arrears, instalment plans for paying off the debts were introduced, and evictions were temporarily suspended.
- **Impact on Revenues:** These support measures led to a decrease in rental revenues for public housing companies, negatively affecting their financial stability.
- **Support in the Housing Cooperative Sector:** Housing cooperatives extended exceptional measures to assist low-income tenants who faced challenges in paying their rents. Government funding and municipal allocations were utilized to help cover rent arrears.
- **Services for Vulnerable Groups:** Local-level initiatives were launched to assist older individuals and other vulnerable groups. Housing companies collaborated with municipalities to provide temporary housing for homeless individuals.
- **Digitalization Acceleration:** The pandemic accelerated the digitalization of housing services. Online platforms were established for administrative procedures related to tenants, and some housing companies offered digital property tours to applicants.

The COVID-19 pandemic had multifaceted effects on Italy's housing and construction sector. While it caused delays in social housing projects and maintenance, it also prompted innovative support measures for tenants and accelerated the adoption of digital tools and services in the housing sector. The economic repercussions and challenges in housing and construction are ongoing concerns that require adaptive strategies and continued attention. [73] [122]

In conclusion, the historical background of social housing in Italy serves as a poignant narrative, illustrating the interplay between housing policies, societal dynamics, and evolving political landscapes. From its nascent beginnings with the Luzzati Law and the subsequent codification of housing regulations to its contemporary state characterized by a flexible, inclusive definition, social housing has consistently been at the forefront of addressing housing distress in Italy. This nuanced historical understanding informs Italy's current approach to housing policy, highlighting the nation's enduring commitment to providing affordable housing for its citizens.

Key Features of the Italian Social Housing System

The Italian social housing system is a complex tapestry, characterized by decentralization, evolving definitions, and multifaceted strategies. This comprehensive exploration aims to delve deeper into the key features of the Italian social housing system, integrating insights from multiple sources. It encompasses eligibility criteria, rent regulations, tenant participation, housing availability, funding mechanisms, and emerging challenges, offering a holistic understanding of Italy's approach to affordable housing.

Decentralization and Regional Responsibilities

A distinctive feature of Italy's housing system is its decentralization, where housing policies are delegated to the country's 23 regions, along with significant involvement from provinces and municipalities. This decentralization allows for a tailored response to diverse housing needs across regions. While it offers flexibility, it also

demands a coordinated effort to ensure the accessibility of affordable housing options throughout the nation. [55]

Diverse Housing Categories

The Italian social housing system classifies publicly supported housing into three primary categories:

1. **Subsidized Housing (edilizia sovvenzionata):** These units receive financial support from the government, making them more affordable for low-income households.
2. **Assisted Housing (edilizia agevolata):** Encompassing housing units benefiting from various forms of government assistance, including reduced interest rates on loans.
3. **Agreed Housing (edilizia convenzionata):** This category is subject to specific agreements between housing providers and local authorities, ensuring both affordability and accessibility.

It's important to note that while these categories provide a framework, the term "social housing" in Italy is often used interchangeably with affordable housing, differentiating it from public housing that predominantly targets low-income households [99] [123] [124]

Tenant Participation and Innovative Management

Tenant participation is a crucial element in Italy's evolving social housing landscape. Recent approaches emphasize community-building and tenant involvement, mirroring global trends in social housing management. Initiatives like Integrated Social Management and self-management projects in Milan and Amsterdam aim to foster a sense of responsibility among tenants, both toward their communities and individual dwellings. This shift towards heightened tenant participation aligns with the global emphasis on a collaborative and engaged approach to housing management. [99] [125]

Target Groups and Social Housing Initiatives

In the realm of housing policy in Italy, the legislative framework has evolved to encompass a wide range of provisions aimed at addressing the housing needs of disadvantaged social categories. A significant development in this regard is the enactment of D.L. 25 giugno 2008 Art. 11, known as the "Piano Casa" or Housing Plan.

D.L. 25 giugno 2008 Art. 11 introduced a novel instrument to facilitate the implementation of the Housing Plan, specifically the utilization of Real Estate Closed Funds. This instrument provides a structured and efficient mechanism for financing and executing housing initiatives intended to benefit disadvantaged social groups.

One of the distinctive features of this legislation is the clear identification of the social categories targeted for social housing provision. These categories include:

- Low-income households, which encompass single-parental or single-income households, often grappling with economic challenges.
- Low-income young couples, acknowledging the unique challenges faced by couples just starting their journey together.
- Elderly individuals facing disadvantaged social or economic conditions, emphasizing the need to provide suitable housing for senior citizens.
- Off-site students, recognizing the importance of affordable accommodation for students pursuing education away from their hometowns.
- Individuals subjected to property repossession measures, highlighting the importance of rehousing individuals facing such circumstances.
- Regular low-income immigrants, residing in the national territory for at least ten years or for at least five years in the same region. This demonstrates an inclusive approach to social housing, encompassing long-term residents.

D.L. 25 giugno 2008 Art. 11, within the context of the Housing Plan, serves as a critical component in addressing the housing disparities among these identified social

categories. It enables strategic financial mechanisms and targeted initiatives to provide housing solutions for those who need it most, thereby contributing to the overall well-being and social stability of these marginalized groups. [103]

Rent Regulations and Affordability Measures

Rent regulations in Italy are strategically designed to ensure affordability. Rents for publicly supported housing are typically set below market rates, with government subsidies bridging the gap. Additionally, income-based rent subsidies are available for low-income households, further alleviating their housing cost burden. These measures underscore Italy's commitment to providing accessible housing options for those unable to access the free-market housing sector. [123]

Housing Availability and Demand

Italy boasts a relatively high number of dwellings per inhabitant. However, experts predict a significant housing shortfall, with only 1.2 million housing units expected to be built over the next decade, falling short by 500,000 units to meet the demand for accommodating new household formations.

Moreover, the social housing sector in Italy constitutes less than 4% of the total housing stock. This proportion reveals the need for substantial growth in the social housing sector to address housing distress effectively. [126] [127] [128]

Funding Mechanisms and Providers

The funding landscape for public housing in Italy is intricate. Regions oversee financing for public housing, collaborating with municipalities to co-finance rental housing assistance and allocate land to housing providers. The central government plays a role in macro programming, co-financing projects, and supporting urban renewal initiatives and social rental housing. Various entities, including foundations, government agencies, cooperatives, and private developers, serve as providers of affordable housing. [55] [114]

Emerging Challenges

Despite Italy's efforts in the realm of social housing, significant challenges persist. A considerable number of households that did not have access to social housing in 2020 face housing deprivation. The social housing sector's relatively small size compared to European standards remains a concern.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated rent arrears in the private rental sector and mortgage payment arrears, increasing financial strain on households. These challenges underscore the need for continued innovation and investment in Italy's social housing system to meet the evolving demands of its diverse population. [129] [126] [130]

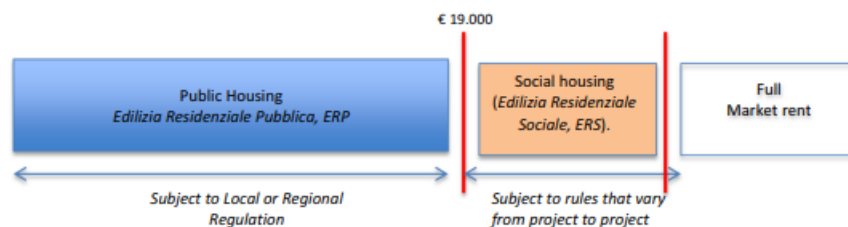


Figure 28 Affordable housing in the Italian housing system (Czischke Ljubetic, D., & van Bortel, G. (2018))

In conclusion, the Italian social housing system embodies a complex interplay of decentralization, diverse housing categories, tenant participation, affordability measures, funding mechanisms, and emerging challenges. Its focus on social cohesion and adaptability aligns seamlessly with Italy's commitment to mitigating housing distress and cultivating housing opportunities for all. By amalgamating public and private practices, innovative management strategies, and robust rent regulations, Italy's social housing system continues to evolve, serving as a cornerstone for enhancing housing accessibility and societal welfare.

Theoretical Foundations Shaping the Italian Social Housing System

This section embarks on a comprehensive exploration of the theoretical foundations that have profoundly influenced the evolution and framework of the Italian social housing system. These theoretical underpinnings encompass welfare state theory,

housing market theories, and social equity principles, offering a nuanced perspective on how these concepts have played pivotal roles in the design and implementation of social housing policies in Italy. It is essential to recognize that these theoretical foundations are not static concepts but rather dynamic guiding principles shaping Italy's ongoing journey towards equitable housing.

Welfare State Theory: The State's Responsibility for Basic Needs

At the core of the Italian social housing system lies the foundational concept of welfare state theory. This theory asserts that the state bears a profound responsibility to meet the basic needs of its citizens, among which housing features prominently. Italy's welfare state, characterized partly by the corporatist-conservative model and partly by the universal welfare model, underpins the state's obligation to provide social protection and support to its populace [131] [99].

Italy's allocation of resources towards social benefits stands out as one of the most substantial among the OECD nations. In the year 2019, this allocation amounted to an impressive 28.2 percent of the nation's GDP. Remarkably, Italy's commitment to its welfare system positions it as the fourth-largest in Europe, trailing closely behind the United Kingdom, and constituting nearly 30% of the country's GDP. [130]

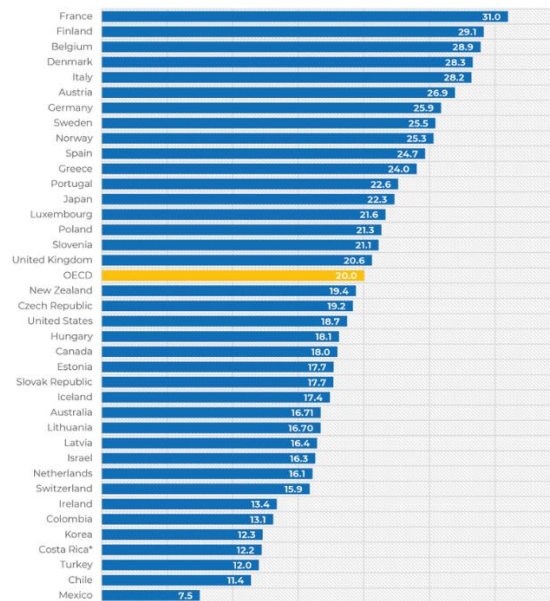


Figure 29 Public Social Spending as % of GDP, 2019 (or nearest year) (OECD (2020) OECD Social Expenditure database)

This commitment materializes through an array of policies and programs tailored to bolstering low-income households and augmenting the supply of affordable housing. It is rooted in the idea that access to adequate housing is not just a matter of personal choice or market dynamics but a fundamental right that must be guaranteed by the state. This perspective forms the moral and philosophical basis for Italy's commitment to housing as a basic need and an essential component of social welfare. [131]

Housing Market Theories: The Dynamic Interplay of Supply and Demand

Housing market theories provide a crucial lens through which to comprehend Italy's social housing landscape. These theories scrutinize the factors that mold the housing market, encompassing government policies, economic conditions, and demographic shifts. Italy's housing market has been notably influenced by global financial system changes, which have reverberated through the availability of credit for prospective homebuyers.

This, in turn, has ramifications for the affordability of housing, impacting a considerable portion of Italian households. Understanding these market theories aids policymakers in navigating the delicate balance between market forces and social

welfare goals. It underscores the need for adaptive policies that can respond to the ever-changing economic and market conditions to ensure housing affordability and accessibility.

For instance, during economic downturns or financial crises, housing markets can experience fluctuations that affect the affordability of homes, potentially exacerbating housing inequalities. In such times, the Italian government's adherence to welfare state principles becomes crucial in mitigating the adverse effects of market dynamics on vulnerable populations [132].

Social Equity Principles: Fostering Fairness and Justice in Housing

Social equity principles form the moral compass guiding the distribution of resources and opportunities within society. In the context of housing, these principles advocate for the equitable access of all individuals to decent and affordable housing, transcending income disparities and social strata. Italy's commitment to these principles is palpable through the gamut of policies and programs aimed at engendering housing equity.

These initiatives span support mechanisms for low-income households and concerted efforts to amplify the supply of affordable housing. Social equity principles drive policies that seek to create a society where housing is not a privilege but a fundamental right. It underscores the conviction that the right to suitable housing is universal, transcending economic status. By anchoring housing within a broader framework of social equity, Italy endeavors to diminish disparities in access to housing and amplify the social fabric's cohesion [133].

The Complex Tapestry of Italian Social Housing

While these theoretical foundations provide a solid backdrop for understanding Italy's social housing system, it's essential to appreciate the complex tapestry of this system. Italy's path towards providing affordable and equitable housing has not been without its challenges and adaptations.

The interplay between welfare state theory, housing market dynamics, and social equity principles is not static. It's a dynamic dance, with policies and practices continually adapting to evolving economic, social, and political landscapes. The balance between market-oriented solutions and social welfare goals is a perpetual challenge, requiring astute policymaking and continuous evaluation.

For example, in the wake of the global financial crisis (GFC), Italy faced intensified challenges in housing affordability and accessibility. The crisis had significant impacts on the housing market, and social housing policies needed to adapt swiftly to address the emerging needs of vulnerable populations. [134] [135]



Figure 30 Italy's house price: difference between asking and sold price (Italy's tax revenue agency/ Valentina Romei)

Italy's Ongoing Journey Towards Equitable Housing

In conclusion, Italy's social housing system is a tapestry interwoven with theoretical foundations that underscore its multifaceted nature. Welfare state theory, housing market theories, and social equity principles are not just theoretical constructs; they're

guiding lights illuminating Italy's path towards providing decent, affordable housing for all citizens.

As Italy continues its journey towards equitable housing, it must navigate the ever-changing tides of economic globalization, demographic shifts, and societal expectations. Theoretical foundations provide the compass, but the implementation and adaptation of policies on the ground are where the real impact is felt.

By grounding its policies in these theories while remaining flexible and responsive, Italy can continue to advance its mission of housing for all. This ongoing journey reflects the nation's commitment to ensuring that housing is not just a commodity but a fundamental right accessible to all, regardless of their economic circumstances.

Summary of Italian Social Mix Policies and Procedures

This section offers a comprehensive overview of Italy's policies and procedures designed to promote social mix within its social housing sector. Social mix, aimed at achieving a balanced socio-economic composition within urban neighborhoods, is a central element of Italy's housing policies. This discussion examines the historical context, the rationale behind these policies, and their implications. We aim to provide a holistic understanding of how Italy addresses social mix in housing and its potential impacts on urban development.

Historical Context: The Emergence of Social Housing in Italy

Italy's approach to social mix policies is deeply rooted in its historical context, which saw the emergence of the concept of social housing in 2008. This marked a significant turning point when the national State provided an official and comprehensive definition (D.M. 22/04/2008) of social housing in the country. According to this definition, social housing in Italy primarily consists of dwellings rented on a permanent basis, including those constructed or rehabilitated through public and private contributions or public funding. These dwellings are typically rented for a

minimum of eight years or sold at an affordable price, all with the overarching goal of achieving a social mix (Ministero delle Infrastrutture e dei Trasporti, 2008). [136] [137]

What's particularly noteworthy about this definition is its inclusivity. It encompasses various dwelling categories, such as rental housing and home ownership, without specifying specific beneficiaries or allocation criteria. This flexibility allows the housing policy to address diverse housing needs.

In the broader context of Italy's housing system, the development of social mix policies has become increasingly important. Public-private partnerships, such as the Integrated Funding System (Sistema Integrato di Fondi), have come to the fore, allowing third-sector housing organizations to contribute significantly to the provision of social rented units, known as "Housing Sociale." These units are instrumental in addressing the housing demand of various population segments, including those with unstable income, low-middle income households, single-parent households, young households, temporary workers, migrants, and students, collectively referred to as the "grey area."

This shift in governance is driven by the recognition that the availability of public housing is often insufficient to meet the needs of these diverse groups, and rising prices in the private rental market are unaffordable. Consequently, third-sector housing organizations have initiated a growing number of "Housing Sociale" projects aimed at providing affordable homes, especially in major cities.

The 2009 National Housing Plan formalized this new configuration of the housing system, solidifying the role of third-sector actors in providing quality housing at affordable prices to a wide range of groups. These initiatives are seen not only as a means to address housing needs but also as a way to foster social cohesion and bridge the gap between housing and broader social policy.

In this transition phase of the Italian housing system, the concept of social mix has gained importance, aiming to create diverse and inclusive communities. Italy's

experience in the development and implementation of social mix policies serves as a valuable case study for understanding the evolving dynamics of social housing in a European context. [34]

Case Studies of Social mix in Italy: Main Features and Analysis

The exploration of key case studies within the realm of Housing Sociale (social housing) in Italy is undertaken in this part. A comprehensive understanding of these projects is sought by delving into their fundamental features and their significance in addressing housing challenges and fostering social inclusion. In this analysis, attention is directed toward two exemplary case studies: "Ospitalità Solidale" and "Casa dell'Accoglienza"

Ospitalità Solidale

Ospitalità Solidale is a notable project in the field of Housing Sociale. It encompasses 24 studios and offers tenancy for a maximum duration of two years. What sets this project apart is its emphasis on social integration. It caters to a specific target group— young people between the ages of 18 and 30, who are integrated into the community alongside low-income, public housing tenants. This collaborative initiative involves various partners, including the Housing cooperative DAR=CASA, associations Arci, Comunità Progetto, and the Municipality of Milan. The project commenced in 2014 and is characterized by a "scattered social mix program" implemented in refurbished public housing units located in District 4 and 9.

The significance of Ospitalità Solidale lies in its innovative approach to addressing housing issues. By housing young people alongside low-income tenants, it encourages social mixing and provides an environment where residents from diverse backgrounds can interact and support each other. This collaborative effort between the Housing cooperative, local associations, and the Municipality of Milan exemplifies the importance of community-based solutions in addressing housing challenges.

Casa dell'Accoglienza

Casa dell'Accoglienza represents another compelling case study in the realm of Housing Sociale. It consists of six dwellings, comprising three studios and three two-room apartments, with a maximum tenancy duration of 18 months. This project is distinguished by its inclusivity, targeting a broad range of individuals with specific needs. These include people with disabilities or less incapacitating problems, students, the elderly, low-middle income groups, and single-parent households. The initiative is a collaborative effort between the Municipality of San Donato Milanese and various cooperatives, such as La Strada, Consorzio SIS, and Spazio Aperti Servizi. Casa dell'Accoglienza commenced in 2015 and offers temporary accommodation for households facing urgent housing needs. The housing structure itself consists of two stories, with a communal ground floor that is accessible to both tenants and neighborhood initiatives.

Casa dell'Accoglienza's significance lies in its adaptability and inclusivity. It accommodates a diverse range of individuals and groups, acknowledging the unique needs of each. Additionally, the presence of communal spaces emphasizes the importance of community involvement and interaction, fostering a sense of belonging among the residents and their surrounding neighborhood.

Analysis and Significance

In analyzing these case studies, we can draw important insights into the complex nature of Housing Sociale in Italy. Ospitalità Solidale highlights the importance of social integration by accommodating young individuals alongside low-income tenants, underscoring the value of community and cooperation in addressing housing challenges. On the other hand, Casa dell'Accoglienza showcases the flexibility and inclusivity that can be achieved in social housing by catering to a wide range of individuals with specific needs while emphasizing community involvement.

These case studies serve as valuable references for policymakers, urban planners, and researchers in the field of social housing. They exemplify innovative approaches to

addressing housing challenges and fostering social inclusion, and they provide valuable lessons for future developments in this field, not only in Italy but also in a global context.

The case studies of Ospitalità Solidale and Casa dell'Accoglienza are shining examples of successful Housing Sociale initiatives in Italy. Their unique features and the collaborative efforts behind them demonstrate the significance of community-based solutions in addressing housing issues and promoting social integration. These projects serve as inspiring models for future developments in the field of social housing, offering valuable insights for policymakers, urban planners, and researchers seeking to address the evolving challenges of housing and social inclusion. [34]

Contemporary Initiatives for a Fine-Grained Social Mix

In recent years, Italy has adapted its social housing strategies to respond to evolving housing needs. Policymakers and practitioners have recognized the necessity for affordable housing and have initiated new social housing projects targeting diverse social groups. These groups encompass students, young households, welfare dependents, and refugees, resulting in a fine-grained social mix within Italian urban neighborhoods (Tosi, 2017). These initiatives have evolved within broader trends in housing policies and are part of the domestic discourse surrounding social mix in Italy. They reflect a commitment to accommodating the varied needs of Italian society while promoting social cohesion and integration. [138] [139]

Varieties of Publicly Supported Housing

Italy's efforts to foster social mix are not limited to a single approach but encompass a spectrum of publicly supported housing types. Traditionally, three main categories exist: subsidised housing (edilizia sovvenzionata), assisted housing (edilizia agevolata), and agreed housing (edilizia convenzionata) which are mentioned before.

1. **Subsidised Housing:** This category targets low-income households and is financed either by the State or local authorities, serving as a vital means of ensuring housing affordability for those facing financial constraints.
2. **Assisted Housing:** Middle-income households are the primary beneficiaries of assisted housing, which receives funding from a combination of public and private funds. This model bridges the affordability gap for a broader demographic, contributing to social mix across income levels.
3. **Agreed Housing:** Aimed at higher-income households, agreed housing is primarily financed by private funds, often with some public support in the form of tax breaks or incentives. This category plays a crucial role in reinforcing the government's dedication to promoting social mix across different income brackets. [140] [134]

Recent Initiatives: Fostering Diversity

Recent years have witnessed Italy actively encouraging diversity within its housing programs through a range of innovative initiatives.

"Housing Sociale" Project: Another significant initiative, the "Housing Sociale" project, aims to promote social inclusion by attracting residents to live in particular regions and revitalizing underutilized town locations . [34]

"Superbonus 110%" Scheme: Italy's post-pandemic recovery strategy includes the "superbonus 110%" scheme, offering homeowners substantial tax credits for upgrading their homes to be more energy-efficient or earthquake-resistant [121]

Incentives for Village Resettlement: Certain picturesque villages in Italy are enticing new residents with cash incentives, aiming to rejuvenate communities that have experienced declining populations [126].

A Holistic Framework for Social Mix

In summary, Italy's approach to achieving social mix in housing is characterized by a comprehensive framework of policies, programs, incentives, and regulations. The official definition of social housing, established in 2008, underscores the commitment to diverse housing solutions. Contemporary initiatives have extended this commitment by addressing the housing needs of various social groups, thereby fostering fine-grained social mixes. Furthermore, the availability of different forms of publicly supported housing demonstrates Italy's dedication to reducing housing distress and offering opportunities to those who cannot access the free-market housing sector.

These policies and procedures offer valuable insights into how Italy strives to create inclusive urban communities while acknowledging the diverse socio-economic landscape, making it a valuable case study for housing policies worldwide.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Italian Social Housing System

The Italian social housing system, like any complex system, exhibits a diverse range of strengths and weaknesses that warrant an in-depth examination. This comprehensive analysis amalgamates insights from two distinct sources to provide a thorough understanding of the Italian social housing landscape. By delving into these strengths and weaknesses, we gain a nuanced perspective on the challenges and opportunities that underlie Italy's approach to social housing.

Strengths of the Italian Social Housing System

Decentralized Policy Implementation:

One of the standout strengths of the Italian social housing system is its decentralized policy implementation. Responsibilities are devolved to the 23 Italian regions, with active participation from provinces and municipalities in the provision of affordable housing. This decentralization empowers local authorities to tailor housing solutions

to the unique needs of their communities. It fosters flexibility and adaptability, ensuring that support is channeled to where it's needed most.

Explanation: Decentralization in housing policy is a distinctive feature of the Italian system, allowing local governments to respond effectively to localized housing demands. This approach ensures that housing solutions are not one-size-fits-all but rather customized to the specific socio-economic conditions and demographics of each region. [55]

Recognition of Diverse Housing Needs:

Italy's social housing system demonstrates an understanding of the diverse groups requiring affordable housing, encompassing young individuals without stable incomes, internal work migrants, low-income families, and the elderly. This acknowledgment of varied housing needs facilitates targeted support for the most vulnerable segments of society, promoting social inclusivity and addressing specific vulnerabilities.

Explanation: Recognizing diverse housing needs is crucial in a society where different groups face unique challenges in accessing affordable housing. Tailoring housing policies to address these specific needs ensures that vulnerable populations are not left behind, promoting social equity and cohesion. [55]

Abundant Housing Stock

Italy ranks among the countries with the highest number of dwellings per inhabitant, signaling a relatively abundant housing stock. This abundance underscores the availability of housing options in the country, potentially mitigating housing-related pressures when compared to nations with limited housing stock.

Explanation: An ample housing stock is advantageous as it indicates that, in theory, there should be enough housing units to meet the demand. However, this also raises questions about why affordability and accessibility remain issues, which we will explore later. [114]

Efforts to Increase Supply and Renovation:

Italy's commitment to increasing the supply of social rental housing units and improving the existing housing stock through renovation and rehabilitation initiatives is commendable (Federcasa). Notable figures for new builds, renovations, and rehabilitation projects in different years highlight a proactive approach to addressing housing challenges.

Explanation: These efforts reflect a strategic investment in improving the housing situation. New construction and renovations not only expand the housing stock but also contribute to economic activity, job creation, and environmental sustainability. [99]

Weaknesses of the Italian Social Housing System

Relatively Small Social Housing Sector:

One of the most pressing weaknesses of the Italian social housing system is the relatively small size of its social housing sector, constituting less than 4% of the total housing stock. This limited availability of social housing falls below European standards, resulting in a substantial gap between housing demand and supply. Approximately 1 million households in Italy lack access to social housing, emphasizing the critical issue of housing deprivation.

Explanation: The small size of the social housing sector means that only a fraction of the population can benefit from it. This issue exacerbates housing inequality, as many individuals and families are left without affordable housing options. [99] [126]

Limited Financial Resources:

Despite the presence of funding mechanisms like national and local housing investment funds, the current pace of construction in the social housing sector falls short of meeting the demand for new housing units. Projections indicate a substantial shortfall in accommodating new household formations. [126] [141]

Explanation: This weakness underscores the importance of financial resources in addressing housing needs. The inadequacy of funding hampers the growth of the social housing sector, leaving many individuals struggling to secure affordable housing. [142]

Inequities in Eligibility Criteria

The Italian social housing system relies on locally regulated allocation criteria, potentially resulting in inconsistencies and inequities in accessing affordable housing. The lack of standardized eligibility criteria can lead to disparities in housing access, particularly for vulnerable populations.

Explanation: Inequities in eligibility criteria introduce a layer of unpredictability and potential discrimination in accessing social housing. Standardized criteria would ensure a fair and transparent process for all applicants. [99]

Uncertainties Surrounding New Development Programs

Italy's social housing landscape has been marked by uncertainty regarding the future of new development programs initiated just before the global financial crisis. The crisis introduced an element of unpredictability, leading to questions regarding the viability of these initiatives. Clarity and stability in housing policy are essential for fostering confidence and investment.

Explanation: Uncertainty in housing policy can deter investment, both from the private sector and potential beneficiaries. Clear and stable policies are crucial for long-term planning and commitment. [126] [99]

Welfare System Challenges

While Italy boasts a robust welfare system overall, certain challenges persist. Concerns revolve around emergency response times, wait times for benefits, and the adequacy of monetary aid provided to vulnerable populations. [130]

These issues are critical components of the broader social welfare ecosystem in which housing is situated. Addressing these challenges is pivotal to creating a holistic social safety net.

Explanation: A robust welfare system is essential for supporting individuals and families facing financial hardships. Delays in emergency response and inadequate monetary aid can exacerbate housing instability, leading to homelessness and other social issues.

Dynamic Nature of Housing Policies

Italy's housing policies exhibit a dynamic nature, often subject to shifts in national government decisions. These changes have, in part, contributed to the evolution of the Italian social housing system. Over time, the definition of social housing in Italy has transitioned from a welfare-oriented perspective to one embracing more neo-liberal principles. This evolution has not only altered the conceptual framework but also led to shifts in spatial tools and housing forms in response to varying policy paradigms. [99]

Explanation: The dynamic nature of housing policies reflects the broader socio-political landscape. Changes in policy paradigms impact the direction and focus of housing programs, necessitating adaptability to new approaches and goals.

Territorial Dimensions and Socio-Economic Disparities

A critical contextual factor influencing Italy's social housing framework is its territorial dimension, particularly the socio-economic divide between Northern and Southern Italy. This divide adds complexity to the socio-housing policies as regional disparities necessitate tailored approaches to address unique challenges and opportunities. Recognizing these disparities is crucial for equitable resource allocation and policy formulation. [99] [143]

Explanation: Regional disparities in socio-economic conditions and housing needs require region-specific solutions. Tailored approaches ensure that policies are effective in addressing the unique challenges faced by different regions within Italy. [17]

In conclusion, the Italian social housing system presents a multifaceted landscape of strengths and weaknesses. While the system benefits from decentralized policies, recognition of diverse housing needs, and efforts to increase housing supply, it grapples with challenges such as a relatively small social housing sector, limited financial resources, inequities in eligibility criteria, and policy uncertainties. Addressing these weaknesses and building upon the strengths requires strategic reforms that focus on expanding the social housing sector, standardizing eligibility criteria, ensuring stable housing policies, and addressing regional disparities. Additionally, tackling challenges within the broader welfare system and adapting to the dynamic nature of housing policies are integral to fostering a more equitable and resilient social housing landscape in Italy.

Conclusion

In the concluding of the methodology chapter, a detailed and meticulous approach was taken to investigate and compare social housing policies and practices in the Netherlands and Italy. The choice of methodology aimed to comprehensively understand and analyze the key features and historical development of social housing systems in both countries. The primary research method employed was a qualitative comparative analysis of existing data sources and literature, allowing for an in-depth exploration of historical contexts, theoretical underpinnings, and practical implementation.

The methodology section began by addressing data, measurement, and techniques, ensuring the precision in selecting relevant sources and measurement techniques. Established data sources, including governmental reports, academic publications, and reputable databases, were used to maintain data reliability. Contextual overviews of

both the Netherlands and Italy were provided to establish a foundation for understanding the dynamics of each nation's social housing policies. This comprehensive approach aimed to avoid superficial comparisons.

In conclusion, Italy and the Netherlands have distinct approaches to social and affordable housing, influenced by their unique socio-economic contexts. The methodology employed in this research chapter was tailored to these complexities, using a qualitative research approach to provide valuable insights into their respective structures and implementation processes. The forthcoming chapters will build upon this foundation to contribute to the field of urban management and policy, particularly in Italy.

Analysis and Results

In the pursuit of a comprehensive analysis comparing social housing policies and practices in the Netherlands and their potential application in Italy, the initial stage involves an introductory exploration of the key features inherent in the policies under examination. The essence of this analysis is to discern the fundamental aspects characterizing these policies, thereby illuminating the elements that have contributed to the Dutch model's effectiveness. Through a methodical approach, this segment identifies and delineates these key features with the aim of deriving valuable insights for their potential implementation in the Italian context. Within the ensuing paragraphs, this section will employ a series of bullet points to succinctly outline these salient features, shedding light on their core attributes and implications. This preliminary phase serves as the foundational cornerstone for the subsequent stages of the analysis, culminating in a meaningful comparison and the identification of policies adaptable to the Italian social housing landscape.

Analysing the Key Features of the Social Housing in the Netherlands

In the realm of social housing, the Netherlands has long been regarded as a vanguard in the design and implementation of effective policies and practices. The purpose of this analysis is to delve into the intricate fabric of the Dutch social housing system, dissecting its key features, and illuminating the policies and procedures that define its success. By discerning these pivotal elements, we aim to lay the groundwork for a comparative evaluation, ultimately exploring their potential application in the Italian context. This initial section sets the stage for a comprehensive examination, shedding light on the core attributes that underpin the Dutch model's effectiveness in providing affordable and accessible housing to its citizens.

Social Housing Policies and Practices in The Netherlands

- Social housing in the Netherlands is designed to cater to individuals and families with low and low-middle incomes, as well as those with defined special needs. It serves as a cornerstone of the Dutch welfare state, ensuring that housing remains accessible to a broad range of the population, contributing to the country's strong social support.
- Housing corporations with a more restricted mission are the primary providers of social housing in the Netherlands. These entities play a pivotal role in ensuring that affordable accommodation is available to those who need it, historically shaping the Dutch housing landscape.
- The Netherlands has experienced shifts in the trends related to social housing, including some degree of stagnation in the overall number of social housing units. In some high-pressure areas, there has been a move towards stricter targeting, leading to increased numbers of eligible applicants, reflecting the ongoing challenge of housing affordability.
- An interesting development in the Netherlands is the emergence of affordable housing for former social housing tenants who have reached an upper-income level. This new segment represents a transition in the Dutch housing landscape, responding to the changing needs of tenants.
- In the Netherlands, the convergence between social and affordable housing is evident, as the government maintains a focus on both segments to provide housing options for various income groups.
- Central to the Dutch housing system are policies aimed at maintaining rent affordability and ensuring housing stability for tenants. Rent regulation sets maximum rent levels for qualifying dwellings to prevent excessive increases. Housing allowance functions as a financial safety net for low-income tenants,

alleviating housing cost burdens. Tenure protection measures offer renters in the social housing sector long-term stability.

- Housing associations, nonprofit organizations, own around 75% of rental homes in the Netherlands. They focus on providing affordable and well-maintained housing options for lower-income households. Housing associations allocate social housing units to individuals or households with income levels below specified thresholds.
- Housing associations have embraced sustainability by developing energy-efficient and environmentally-friendly housing solutions. Social return on investment initiatives encompass community development, promoting social cohesion, supporting educational programs, and offering employment opportunities for local residents.
- The Dutch social housing system has positively impacted housing affordability and social cohesion. However, it faces challenges like housing shortages, long waiting times, and eligibility caps. Building materials prices are also on the rise.
- 50% of Dutch social housing achieves high energy performance ratings. A transition from natural gas to district heating and heat pumps is underway. Solar panels are increasingly installed.
- Renovation efforts aim to upgrade poorly-performing dwellings and phase out low-rated homes by 2030. Challenges include labor shortages and supply chain issues. For new construction, challenges involve land scarcity, labor force, supply chain, and permitting processes.
- The Netherlands' social housing policies offer insights such as effective mechanisms like rent regulation and housing allowance. Housing associations' role highlights the potential of nonprofits in housing provision. Policymakers must adapt to evolving conditions to create inclusive housing systems prioritizing well-being and stability.

Key Features of the Dutch Social Housing System

- The Dutch social housing system relies on a robust legal framework to ensure order, fairness, and accountability. This framework includes laws and regulations governing social housing, clearly defining the roles of various stakeholders, including housing associations, local governments, and tenants. It emphasizes the importance of catering to specific target groups, such as low-income households, ensuring smooth cooperation among stakeholders and upholding defined standards and objectives.
- Innovative financing mechanisms sustain affordable housing initiatives in the Netherlands. The government offers financial support through subsidies and guarantees, empowering housing associations to provide affordable housing to low-income households. Housing associations also have access to low-cost loans from specialized banks, facilitating construction and maintenance activities to enhance social housing supply.
- Transparency and accountability are fundamental principles of the Dutch social housing system. Housing associations are required to publish annual reports that detail their activities and financial performance. Independent organizations conduct audits to ensure compliance with established guidelines and regulations, fostering transparency and enhancing the system's credibility.
- The Dutch social housing system is committed to inclusivity, catering to a diverse range of target groups, including low-income households, the elderly, people with disabilities, immigrants, the homeless, itinerant communities, and asylum-seekers. Housing associations play a pivotal role in providing specialized housing for these groups, contributing to the quality of life in neighborhoods and regions through investments in areas like care, student housing, and sustainability initiatives.
- The Netherlands regulates both social and private housing, covering aspects like security of tenure, rent, rent increases, maintenance, and service charges. Low-

income tenants in social housing are eligible for housing benefits if their rent exceeds a certain threshold. Housing associations allocate the majority of their social housing to individuals with incomes below specified thresholds, with variations in regions facing housing shortages.

- Netherlands uses a points-based system to assess housing quality and determine rental prices, primarily for lower-priced properties. Housing associations manage the lower-end rental market, subject to income allocation ceilings, while the middle and upper segments are predominantly managed by private landlords.
- Two distinct features of the Dutch social housing system include decommodification and scale. Decommodification involves retaining a significant portion of housing stock away from the open market to ensure stability and affordability. The Dutch system also boasts a remarkable scale, making social housing a mainstream housing choice, not just a safety net for those in need. This broader approach promotes inclusivity and social cohesion.
- The Dutch social housing system offers valuable lessons for policymakers worldwide, emphasizing the insulation of housing from market fluctuations and the integration of social housing into the broader housing fabric. These innovative strategies promote affordability, accessibility, and social cohesion. Policymakers and practitioners can draw inspiration from the Dutch model to enhance their social housing approaches and create equitable living conditions on a global scale.

Summary of Dutch Social Mix Policies and Procedures

- The historical evolution of urban policy in the Netherlands plays a pivotal role in understanding Dutch social mix policies. The country's urban policy evolved from enhancing disadvantaged urban districts to an area-based approach, driven by concerns about spatial concentration of low-income households. This led to the introduction of a housing mix, especially through initiatives like the "Magic Mix"

Project, targeting a wide range of social groups, including students, young households, welfare dependents, and refugees.

- Traditionally, social housing in the Netherlands was accessible to various income groups, including the middle class and was provided by housing associations. However, there has been a shift toward serving primarily low-income groups, aligning with broader trends of neoliberal restructuring in the welfare state since the 1990s.
- Housing affordability challenges have gained prominence in the Netherlands, particularly following the influx of refugees and asylum seekers in 2015. To address these problems, housing associations started exploring solutions to accommodate diverse social groups with varying lifestyles, ethnicities, and social conditions, leading to the concept of the "Magic Mix." This concept represents small-scale social housing initiatives emerging in Dutch cities, often on a temporary basis.
- The idea of social mix has evolved in Dutch urban and housing policy, shifting from socioeconomic to ethnic terms, especially as the concentration of ethnic minorities was perceived as detrimental to integration. Urban renewal programs have played a significant role in achieving mixed post-war neighborhoods.
- Case studies such as "Startblok Riekerhaven" and "Majella Wonen" exemplify the potential of the "Magic Mix" concept in promoting inclusive housing. These initiatives intentionally combine different groups of residents with varying backgrounds to promote social inclusion and self-reliance, showcasing innovative approaches to inclusive housing.
- The Dutch government's response to immigration and housing shortages involves measures to manage the influx of new asylum seekers and cooperation with municipalities to provide housing for those with residence permits. This dual strategy exemplifies the Netherlands' commitment to inclusivity.

- Diversity in Dutch housing programs is promoted through various initiatives, extending beyond allocating housing to asylum seekers. These initiatives aim to promote social mixing within disadvantaged urban districts and cultivate inclusive communities.
- The Dutch government has implemented specific programs, incentives, and regulations to achieve social mix, including requirements for new housing developments to incorporate affordable housing units. Incentives are provided to encourage the creation of mixed-income communities.
- Dutch authorities acknowledge challenges in the effectiveness of social mix policies in addressing urban issues, including the concentration of lower-income tenants in the social housing sector. Continuous assessment and policy adjustments reflect a commitment to improvement.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Dutch Social Housing System

Strengths

- The Dutch social housing system is characterized by its impressive scale, boasting the largest social housing sector in Europe. In 2020, it accounted for about 29.1% of the total housing stock, offering over 2.2 million units dedicated to social housing. This expansive provision ensures that a substantial portion of the Dutch population has access to affordable and secure housing, highlighting the government's commitment to housing welfare and social inclusion.
- The Dutch government has historically employed two crucial policy instruments, rent regulation, and housing allowance, to ensure the affordability of rental housing. Nearly 29% of housing in the Netherlands had rents below €763 per month in 2022. These measures have been effective in safeguarding access to decent housing for low-income households, aligning with the Dutch commitment to social equity in housing.

- The Dutch social housing system is decentralized, relying on a network of 284 non-profit housing associations. These associations are responsible for constructing, owning, and managing social housing properties. This decentralization empowers them with flexibility to address local needs and conditions, promoting community integration and responsiveness to regional demands.
- Notably, the Dutch social housing system is financially self-sufficient. Housing associations operate without direct subsidies, sustaining their housing stock through rental income and long-term loans for construction projects. This financial independence ensures the long-term viability and sustainability of the social housing sector, reducing the burden on public finances.

Weaknesses

- Despite its strengths, the Dutch social housing system faces a significant housing shortage. Factors such as population growth and inadequate production of new housing units have contributed to this problem. In 2020, the housing shortage was estimated at 331,000 dwellings, posing challenges for affordable housing and impacting labor mobility and economic growth.
- Eligibility for social housing is determined by income caps, leaving a substantial portion of households unable to access affordable housing. Additionally, long waiting times, such as an average of approximately five-and-a-half years in the Amsterdam region, create frustration and uncertainty for those in need of housing.
- The Dutch housing market has faced challenges related to rising building materials prices and supply constraints. These issues can lead to higher construction costs, exacerbating affordability problems and hindering efforts to provide affordable housing.
- Recent research has revealed an increase in energy poverty in the Netherlands, with a significant number of households experiencing higher energy costs. The

government has implemented measures to address this issue, including price caps and energy-saving initiatives by social housing companies.

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Analyzing the Key Features of the Social Housing in Italy

As we delve into the analysis of social housing policies and practices in Italy, it's imperative to understand the core elements that define this nation's approach to providing housing for its citizens. Italy, renowned for its rich cultural heritage and diverse landscapes, also grapples with housing challenges typical of many European nations. In this section, we will unravel the fundamental aspects of the Italian social housing system, shedding light on its unique characteristics and operational procedures. A comprehensive understanding of these key features will not only illuminate the strengths and weaknesses of Italy's approach but will also serve as a foundation for the subsequent comparison with the Dutch model. This analysis is vital for policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders aiming to enhance Italy's social housing landscape and potentially adopt successful elements from the Netherlands.

Social Housing Policies and Practices in Italy

- Social housing in Italy primarily targets individuals and families with low incomes and those with special needs. It serves as a safety net for the most vulnerable members of society who may not have access to the private rental market.
- Local and regional authorities, along with other sub-national entities, are responsible for providing social housing in Italy. This decentralized approach aims to ensure local responsiveness, but it can lead to disparities in the availability and quality of social housing in different regions.
- Italy has faced challenges in its social housing sector, including funding issues, changing demographics, and shifts in policy priorities. However, there is a

growing recognition of the need to address housing issues for low-income and vulnerable populations, leading to some regions exploring innovative solutions.

- The distinction between social and affordable housing in Italy is not always clear-cut. Affordable housing often targets middle-income individuals and families, with regional and local variations in eligibility criteria. Various organizations, including housing funds and not-for-profit entities, play a crucial role in providing affordable housing options.
- The regulatory framework for social housing in Italy is defined by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport. It encourages both public and private sector involvement in providing affordable and accessible housing options.
- Italy's social housing landscape comprises three primary categories: subsidized housing, assisted housing, and agreed housing. These categories have specific objectives and characteristics aimed at providing affordable housing to different groups.
- Political changes and regional economic disparities have significantly influenced social housing policies in Italy. The geographical dimension, particularly the socio-economic disparities between Northern and Southern regions, plays a crucial role in shaping housing needs and policy responses.
- Italy has witnessed a shift towards innovative collaborations and public-private partnerships in social housing, focusing on creating social value and addressing housing challenges.
- Italy has seen a transformation in housing arrangements, with collaborative services and urban integration becoming more prominent. Housing cooperatives have played a significant role in addressing housing challenges and social inclusion needs.

- Italian cooperatives are actively involved in addressing emerging housing and welfare challenges through innovative approaches and social impact investments.
- The definition of social housing in Italy has become more complex, with a shift towards a more neo-liberal perspective, raising questions about the future trajectory of social housing in the country.
- The Italian government has introduced measures to address affordable housing issues, including initiatives such as the "Housing Plan." Non-profit organizations, like Fondazione Housing Sociale, support the development of affordable housing.
- Italy faces energy efficiency challenges, particularly in existing housing stock. Renovation and construction efforts are being made to improve energy efficiency, with incentives such as the 'Superbonus 110%' measure.
- Rising prices and energy expenses are a concern for residents in cooperative housing. Some households are implementing measures to cope with financial challenges, and the government has introduced support for individuals with low incomes.
- Challenges remain in ensuring long-term affordability and sustainability in social housing. The future direction of social housing policies in Italy involves ongoing debates about the balance between public and private involvement, housing as a social right, and sustainability integration.
- The Parma Social Housing Fund represents an innovative approach to address the housing needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the Parma region. It involves diverse stakeholders, flexible financing structures, and a focus on both economic and social outcomes.
- Italy faces challenges in meeting housing demand, and the government is implementing various measures to improve housing conditions, address current challenges, and prepare for future housing needs

Key Features of the Italian Social Housing System

- Italy's housing policies are decentralized, with responsibilities delegated to the country's regions, provinces, and municipalities. This allows for tailored responses to diverse housing needs but demands coordination to ensure nationwide accessibility.
- Italy classifies publicly supported housing into three primary categories: subsidized housing, assisted housing, and agreed housing. These categories offer a framework for providing affordable housing, differentiating from public housing, which primarily targets low-income households.
- Tenant participation is crucial, emphasizing community-building and tenant involvement. This aligns with global trends in social housing management and reflects a shift towards increased tenant responsibility and engagement.
- Italian legislation identifies specific social categories for social housing provision, including low-income households, young couples, the elderly, off-site students, individuals facing property repossession, and regular low-income immigrants. These categories highlight an inclusive approach to social housing.
- Rent regulations ensure affordability, with rents typically set below market rates and income-based rent subsidies available for low-income households. These measures underscore Italy's commitment to providing accessible housing.
- Italy faces a significant housing shortfall, with experts predicting a shortfall in accommodating new household formations. The social housing sector constitutes less than 4% of the total housing stock, highlighting the need for growth in this sector.
- Regions oversee financing for public housing, collaborating with municipalities. The central government plays a role in macro programming, co-financing projects, and supporting urban renewal initiatives. A variety of entities, including

foundations, government agencies, cooperatives, and private developers, serve as providers of affordable housing.

- Despite efforts, challenges persist, such as a considerable number of households facing housing deprivation and the relatively small size of the social housing sector compared to European standards. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated financial strains on households.

Summary of Italian Social Mix Policies and Procedures

- Italy's approach to social mix policies is rooted in the emergence of the concept of social housing in 2008, which aimed to achieve a social mix. The definition of social housing in Italy is inclusive, encompassing various dwelling categories, such as rental housing and home ownership, without specifying specific beneficiaries or allocation criteria. This flexibility allows the housing policy to address diverse housing needs.
- Italy has embraced public-private partnerships, such as the Integrated Funding System, which allows third-sector housing organizations to contribute significantly to the provision of social rented units. These units address the housing demand of various population segments, including those with unstable income, low-middle income households, single-parent households, young households, temporary workers, migrants, and students.
- Italy's social housing initiatives are exemplified by case studies such as "Ospitalità Solidale" and "Casa dell'Accoglienza." Ospitalità Solidale encourages social mixing by housing young people alongside low-income tenants, fostering interaction and support among residents from diverse backgrounds. Casa dell'Accoglienza targets a broad range of individuals with specific needs, emphasizing inclusivity and community involvement.
- Italy has adapted its social housing strategies to respond to evolving housing needs. Policymakers have initiated new social housing projects targeting diverse social groups, such as students, young households, welfare dependents, and

refugees. These initiatives aim to create a fine-grained social mix within Italian urban neighborhoods.

- Italy offers a spectrum of publicly supported housing types, including subsidized housing for low-income households, assisted housing for middle-income households, and agreed housing for higher-income households. This approach ensures social mix across different income brackets.
- Italy has actively encouraged diversity in housing programs through innovative initiatives like the "Housing Sociale" project, the "Superbonus 110%" scheme, and incentives for village resettlement. These initiatives promote social inclusion, energy efficiency, and community revitalization.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Italian Social Housing System

Strengths:

- **Decentralized Policy Implementation:** Italy's decentralized approach empowers local authorities to tailor housing solutions to the unique needs of their communities, ensuring that support is channeled to where it's needed most.
- **Recognition of Diverse Housing Needs:** Italy acknowledges the diverse groups requiring affordable housing, facilitating targeted support for vulnerable segments of society, promoting social inclusivity, and addressing specific vulnerabilities.
- **Abundant Housing Stock:** Italy boasts an ample housing stock, potentially mitigating housing-related pressures when compared to nations with limited housing stock.
- **Efforts to Increase Supply and Renovation:** Italy's commitment to increasing the supply of social rental housing units and improving the existing housing stock through renovation and rehabilitation initiatives reflects a proactive approach to addressing housing challenges.

Weaknesses:

- **Relatively Small Social Housing Sector:** The social housing sector in Italy is relatively small, constituting less than 4% of the total housing stock. This limited availability results in a substantial gap between housing demand and supply, leading to housing deprivation for approximately 1 million households.
- **Limited Financial Resources:** Despite the presence of funding mechanisms, the current pace of construction in the social housing sector falls short of meeting the demand for new housing units. Projections indicate a substantial shortfall in accommodating new household formations.
- **Inequities in Eligibility Criteria:** Italy's reliance on locally regulated allocation criteria can result in inconsistencies and inequities in accessing affordable housing, potentially leading to disparities in housing access.
- **Uncertainties Surrounding New Development Programs:** Uncertainty in Italy's housing policies, especially regarding new development programs initiated just before the global financial crisis, has led to questions regarding the viability of these initiatives. Clarity and stability in housing policy are essential for fostering confidence and investment.
- **Welfare System Challenges:** Challenges within Italy's robust welfare system, including delays in emergency response times, wait times for benefits, and the adequacy of monetary aid provided to vulnerable populations, impact the overall social safety net, including housing stability.
- **Dynamic Nature of Housing Policies:** Italy's housing policies exhibit a dynamic nature, subject to shifts in national government decisions, which can impact the direction and focus of housing programs, necessitating adaptability to new approaches and goals.
- **Territorial Dimensions and Socio-Economic Disparities:** Italy's socio-housing policies are influenced by regional disparities, particularly the socio-economic divide between Northern and Southern Italy, necessitating tailored approaches to address unique challenges and opportunities.

Cross-Country Analysis of Social Housing Systems in the Netherlands and Italy

In the comprehensive comparison table provided, the social housing systems of both the Netherlands and Italy are meticulously examined, highlighting their respective strengths and weaknesses. The key features and intricacies of these housing systems are detailed, shedding light on their effectiveness in catering to the housing needs of their citizens. Various aspects, including social housing policies, inclusivity, financing mechanisms, and the impact of these systems on their societies, are intricately compared, offering valuable insights into the successes and challenges faced by each country. This in-depth analysis serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders looking to enhance these social housing landscapes and potentially draw inspiration from the models presented by the Netherlands and Italy.

Aspect	Dutch Social Housing System	Italian Social Housing System
Social Housing Policies and Practices		
Target Population	Low to low-middle incomes, special needs	Low incomes, special needs
Primary Providers	Housing corporations with a mission	Local and regional authorities
Trends in Social Housing	Shifts and some stagnation in high-pressure	Efforts to increase supply and renovation
Emerging Housing Types	Affordable housing for former social housing tenants reaching upper-income level	Customized policies to address diverse needs
Focus on Both Social and Affordable Housing	Evident	Complex relationship between the two
Rent Regulation	Effective in ensuring affordability	Effective in ensuring affordability
Housing Allowance	Provides financial safety net	Supports low-income tenants
Housing Stock Ownership	75% owned by housing associations	Various entities provide affordable housing
Sustainability Efforts	Embracing energy-efficient housing	Efforts to improve energy efficiency
Challenges	Housing shortages, eligibility caps, waiting times, affordability challenges	Limited financial resources, inequities in eligibility criteria, uncertainties in housing policies
Key Features of the Social Housing System		
Legal Framework	Robust legal framework emphasizing order, fairness, and accountability	Decentralized policy implementation, tailored solutions
Innovative Financing	Government subsidies and low-cost loans for housing associations	Various funding mechanisms and government involvement

Transparency and Accountability	Publish annual reports, independent audits	Tenant participation, decentralized policy
	ensuring compliance	implementation, defined social categories
Inclusivity	Catering to diverse groups, housing associations provide specialized housing	Rent regulation, social housing for low-income households, inclusivity in housing
Rent Regulation	Effective in ensuring affordability	Effective in ensuring affordability
Decommodification and Scale	Significant portion of housing stock retained away from the open market	Small social housing sector compared to European standards
Global Policy Inspiration	Valuable lessons for policymakers worldwide emphasizing insulation from market fluctuations and social inclusion	Valuable lessons for policymakers, but questions about future trajectory
Summary of Social Mix Policies and Procedures		
Evolution of Social Mix Policies	Shift from socioeconomic to ethnic terms, focus on integration and mixed post-war neighborhoods	Emergence of social housing concept in 2008, flexible approach to address diverse needs
Inclusive Housing	Promotes inclusive communities through housing cooperatives and community involvement	Collaboration between public and private sectors, innovative housing projects
Housing Mix	Shift towards serving low-income groups in response to affordable housing	Diverse publicly supported housing types, initiatives for inclusive housing
Public-Private Partnerships	Promotes social value and addresses housing challenges	Public-private partnerships to address evolving housing needs
Strengths and Weaknesses of the Social Housing System		
Strengths		
Scale	Largest social housing sector in Europe	Decentralized policy implementation
Affordability Measures	Effective rent regulation and housing allowance	Recognition of diverse housing needs Abundant housing stock
Financial Self-Sufficiency	Financially self-sufficient, reduced burden on public finances	Efforts to increase supply and renovation
Tenant Participation	Tenant involvement, community building	Tailored policies for diverse needs
Inclusivity	Inclusivity in housing policies, social mix across income brackets	Rent regulation, affordability measures
Weaknesses		
Housing Shortage	Significant housing shortage	Small social housing sector, housing shortages
Eligibility Restrictions	Income caps, long waiting times for social housing	Limited financial resources, inequities in eligibility criteria, uncertainties
Construction Challenges	Rising building materials prices, supply chain issues	in housing policies, limited resources
Energy Poverty	Increase in energy poverty, higher energy costs for households	Limited energy efficiency in existing housing, rising energy expenses
Policy Uncertainty	Uncertainty due to policy shifts, impacts	Dynamic housing policies, uncertain future

	on investment and confidence	trajectory
Regional Disparities	Socio-economic disparities impacting	Regional disparities, tailored solutions
	housing needs	for diverse regions

Table 4 Comparative Analysis of Dutch and Italian Social Housing Systems

The comparison between the social housing systems of the Netherlands and Italy reveals several insightful findings. The Dutch social housing system stands out for its expansive scale, effective affordability measures through rent regulation and housing allowance, and the strong financial self-sufficiency of housing associations. It successfully promotes inclusivity and tenant involvement, ensuring that a significant portion of the Dutch population has access to affordable and secure housing. However, it faces challenges related to housing shortages and eligibility caps, which can lead to long waiting times for those in need. On the other hand, the Italian social housing system, while decentralized and adaptive to diverse housing needs, grapples with a relatively small social housing sector and limited financial resources. It recognizes the importance of catering to vulnerable segments of society but faces challenges in delivering on these commitments, especially given regional disparities. Both systems offer valuable lessons for policymakers globally, emphasizing the need for dynamic and adaptable approaches to ensure housing affordability and social inclusion in a continuously evolving landscape.

Recommendations for Italy: Learning from the Dutch Model

In the pursuit of enhancing its social housing landscape, Italy can look to the Netherlands for valuable policy insights. The highly successful Dutch social housing system serves as a valuable model that Italy can follow to overcome its housing-related hurdles. The recommendations put forth encompass a range of areas, from expanding social housing production to promoting sustainability and inclusivity. By adopting these policies, Italy can advance towards a more equitable and secure housing environment, catering to the needs of its citizens and fostering social cohesion within communities.

- **Expanding Social Housing:** Increase the production of social housing units to address the housing shortage and ensure that low-income individuals and families have access to affordable housing options.
- **Rent Regulation:** Implement effective rent regulation to ensure that rental prices remain affordable for low-income households. This could involve setting maximum rent levels for qualifying dwellings.
- **Housing Allowance:** Introduce a housing allowance system to provide a financial safety net for low-income tenants, helping alleviate housing cost burdens.
- **Housing Associations:** Promote the role of housing associations and non-profit organizations in providing affordable and well-maintained housing options for lower-income households.
- **Sustainability Initiatives:** Encourage the development of energy-efficient and environmentally-friendly housing solutions, including incentives for using sustainable materials and technologies.
- **Inclusivity:** Emphasize the importance of inclusivity in social housing policies, catering to diverse social groups and specific needs, such as the elderly, people with disabilities, immigrants, and others.
- **Decommodification:** Consider retaining a significant portion of housing stock away from the open market to ensure stability and affordability, similar to the Dutch approach.
- **Tenant Participation:** Promote tenant involvement and community-building within social housing developments to enhance social cohesion.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Establish a robust legal framework that emphasizes transparency, fairness, and accountability, including annual reports and independent audits to ensure compliance.

- **Funding Mechanisms:** Explore innovative financing mechanisms that can sustain affordable housing initiatives, including subsidies and low-cost loans for housing associations.
- **Promotion of Public-Private Partnerships:** Encourage collaborations between the public and private sectors to enhance the supply of social housing and address evolving housing needs.
- **Energy Efficiency:** Focus on improving the energy efficiency of existing housing stock through renovation and rehabilitation initiatives, similar to the Dutch efforts.
- **Affordable Housing Categories:** Create different categories of affordable housing based on income brackets, catering to various groups within the population.
- **Long-Term Viability:** Aim for financial self-sufficiency in the social housing sector, reducing the burden on public finances and ensuring long-term viability.
- **Diverse Housing Programs:** Promote diversity in housing programs to accommodate different income groups and address specific housing needs, such as students, young households, and refugees.

These policy recommendations draw inspiration from the effective strategies employed in the Dutch social housing system, offering Italy valuable insights to enhance its own social housing landscape and better meet the housing needs of its residents.

Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, I reflect on the journey I have undertaken to explore and compare social housing policies and practices in the Netherlands and Italy, with the aim of drawing valuable lessons for the improved management of the built environment in these two distinct contexts.

At the outset of this thesis, I laid the foundation for this research by emphasizing the significance of social housing policies in shaping the built environment. I introduced the core concepts of social housing and outlined the main objectives and structure of this study. Delving into the rich tapestry of literature on the subject was a crucial first step.

Throughout the extensive literature review, I delved deep into the heart of social housing, examining the types, theories, and practical impacts of social housing programs. I presented a panoramic view of social housing in various fields of study, highlighting its significance from multiple perspectives. By analyzing notable research studies, articles, and journals, I gained invaluable insights into the historical context and theoretical underpinnings of social housing, particularly the concept of social mix.

In the data and methodology section, I meticulously described the tools and techniques I employed to gather and analyze data. By examining the data sources and measurement techniques, I ensured the reliability and validity of the information at hand. I provided an overview of the social housing policies and practices in both the Netherlands and Italy, shedding light on the historical backgrounds, key features, and theoretical foundations of their respective social housing systems. In doing so, I conducted a comprehensive analysis of the strengths and weaknesses inherent in each system.

In the pursuit of enhancing its social housing landscape, Italy can look to the Netherlands for valuable policy insights. The highly successful Dutch social housing

system serves as a valuable model that Italy can follow to overcome its housing-related hurdles. The recommendations put forth encompass a range of areas, from expanding social housing production to promoting sustainability and inclusivity. By adopting these policies, Italy can advance towards a more equitable and secure housing environment, catering to the needs of its citizens and fostering social cohesion within communities.

The policy recommendations include:

- Expanding Social Housing
- Rent Regulation
- Housing Allowance
- Housing Associations
- Sustainability Initiatives
- Inclusivity
- Decommodification
- Tenant Participation
- Transparency and Accountability
- Funding Mechanisms
- Promotion of Public-Private Partnerships
- Energy Efficiency
- Affordable Housing Categories
- Long-Term Viability
- Diverse Housing Programs

These policy recommendations draw inspiration from the effective strategies employed in the Dutch social housing system, offering Italy valuable insights to enhance its own social housing landscape and better meet the housing needs of its residents

This study has been a comprehensive endeavor to shed light on the intricacies of social housing policies in two different contexts. However, like any research, it comes with its own strengths and limitations. Given the language barrier and the fact that much of the rules and documentation are in Dutch or Italian, there may be aspects that require further exploration or were beyond the scope of this research. Nevertheless, the rigorous methodology employed and the systematic approach adopted have allowed for a thorough examination of the subject matter.

Suggestions for Future Studies

In light of the limitations of this study, I recommend that future research in the field of social housing should explore a broader range of international case studies to draw more robust comparisons and policy insights. Particularly, a more comprehensive examination of the sustainable development and environmental aspects, with a focus on energy efficiency, should be a priority for future studies. Understanding the ecological impact and energy considerations in social housing policies can offer valuable insights for the ongoing discourse on housing management.

In conclusion, this thesis has taken a significant step in understanding social housing policies, their implementation, and the lessons that can be learned for improved management of the built environment. The Netherlands and Italy serve as fascinating case studies, and the policy recommendations derived from this research have the potential to make a positive impact on the housing landscape in Italy and beyond. It is my hope that this work contributes to the ongoing discourse surrounding social housing and informs future policy decisions in this critical area, with a heightened

emphasis on sustainability and energy efficiency considerations in future comparative studies.

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