Conceptualising the Covid-19 shock to understand how we live and work in cities

[ENHR 2023] 30.06.2023 / CONSTANCE UYTTEBROUCK

- WFH during Covid-19 > spatial, policy, institutional consequences?

- Outcome of work flexibilization > effects on housing and cities

- WFH as first generation of telework

- Pandemic v. live-work relationships in housing and urban studies

The work from home revolution is here to stay - if you're rich, white and live in London
André Spicer

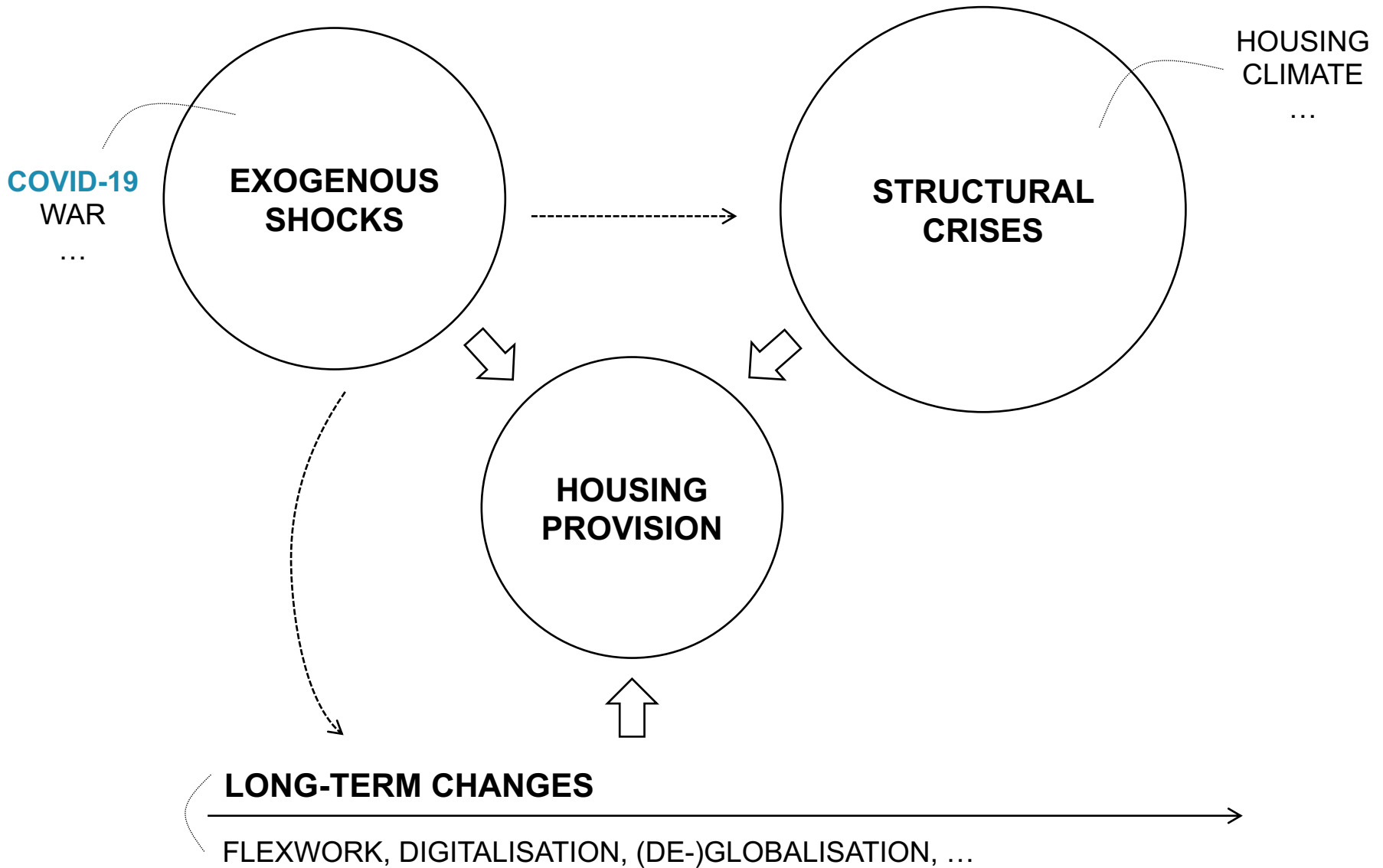Hybrid work benefits both our professional and personal lives, but data suggests it has entrenched existing inequalities
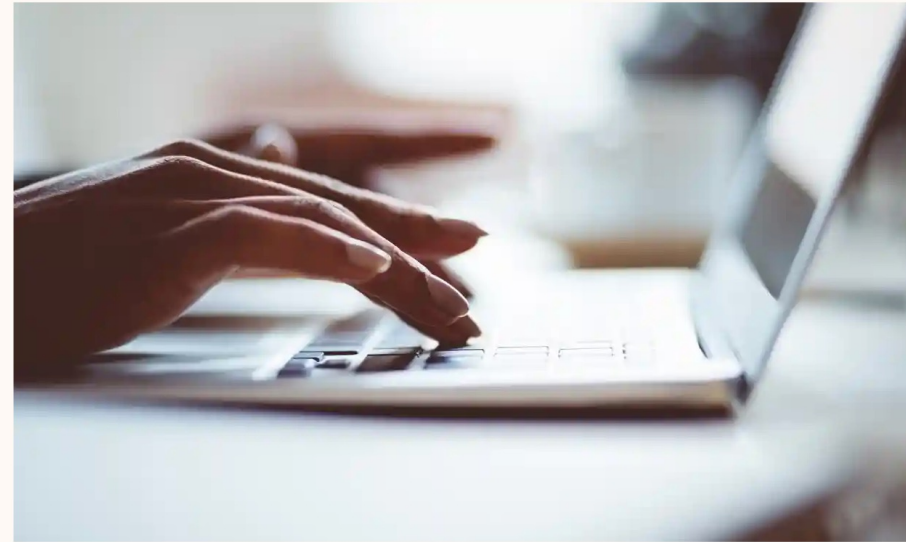
- Need for conceptualizing Covid-19 as a study object

- Goal: delivering a research agenda for housing and urban studies

- What changes in urban live-work relationships made apparent under Covid-19 require further research?

Cities after coronavirus: how Covid-19 could radically alter urban life

EXOGENOUS
SHOCKS

COVID-19
WAR
…

STRUCTURAL
CRISES

HOUSING
CLIMATE
…

HOUSING
PROVISION

LONG-TERM CHANGES

FLEXWORK, DIGITALISATION, (DE-)GLOBALISATION, …
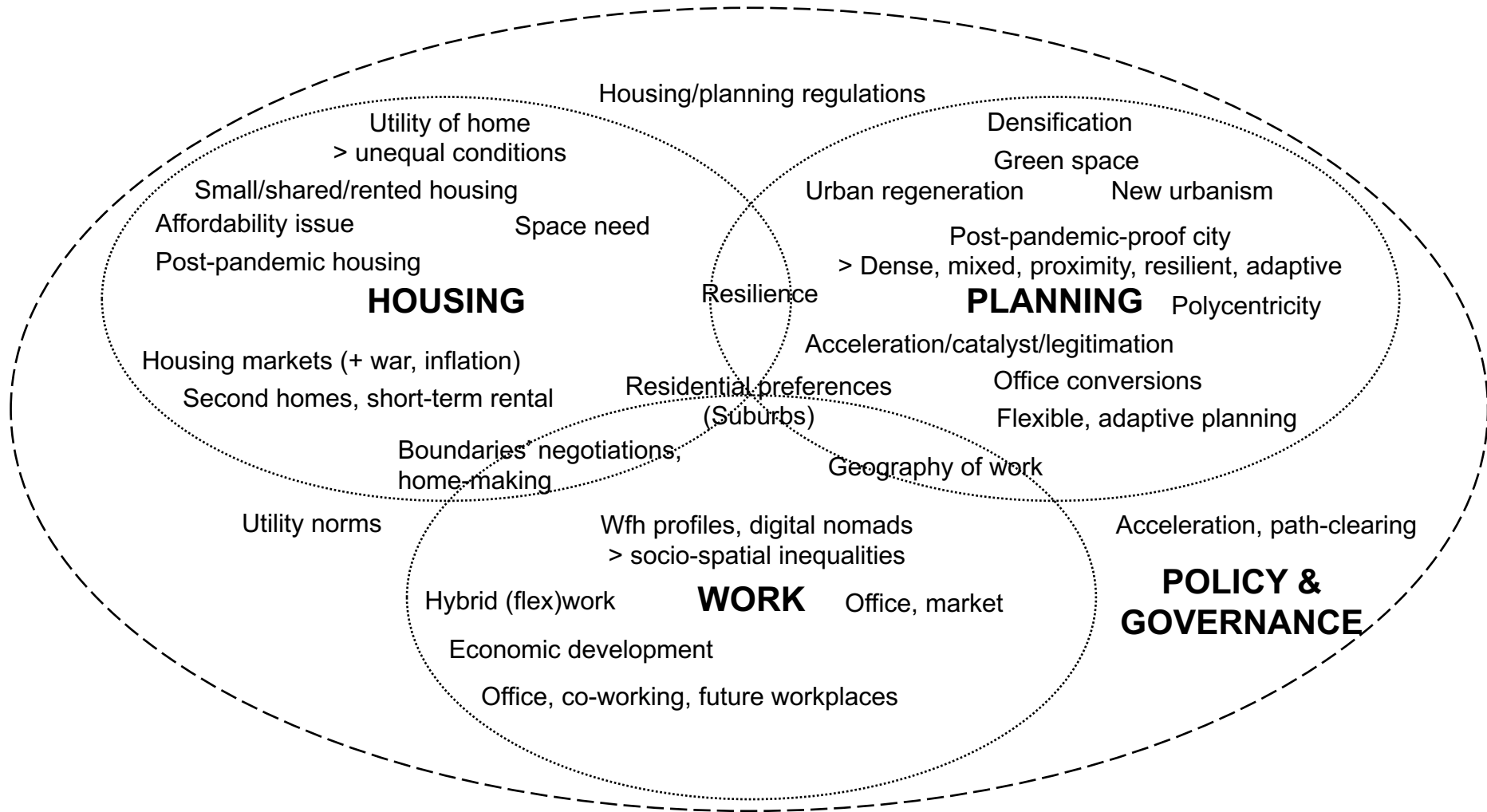
- Epidemic diseases, sanitary movements > urban renewal, slum clearance, new housing regulations [Sanitary city]

- Industrialisation > segregation of living and working [Fordist city], modernist housing

- 1970s: ICT, knowledge economy > flexible work arrangements

- Flexible housing markets, shrinking domestic space, housing financialization

- Planning discourse drawing on proximity, density, mixed-use > 'live-work' environment

- Geography of work and residential locations: knowledge economy in global cities and polycentric regions v. relaxed home-work constraints

Housing/planning regulations

Utility of home
> unequal conditions

Densification

Green space

Small/shared/rented housing

Urban regeneration   New urbanism

Affordability issue   Space need

Post-pandemic housing

Post-pandemic-proof city
> Dense, mixed, proximity, resilient, adaptive

HOUSING

Resilience

PLANNING   Polycentricity

Acceleration/catalyst/legitimation

Housing markets (+ war, inflation)

Office conversions

Second homes, short-term rental

Residential preferences
(Suburbs)

Flexible, adaptive planning

Boundaries' negotiations,
home-making

Geography of work

Utility norms

Wfh profiles, digital nomads
> socio-spatial inequalities

Acceleration, path-clearing

Hybrid (flex)work   **WORK**   Office, market

**POLICY &
GOVERNANCE**

Economic development

Office, co-working, future workplaces

- WFH normalised in advanced services and knowledge/tech sectors

- Trend more moderate than expected

- Highly-educated workers with office-based employment in densely-populated areas with technology infrastructure

- \> Socio-economic-spatial inequalities

- Shift to hybrid work > new office roles and workplaces, spatial redistribution

New York skyscrapers sit empty as Manhattan reels from rise of home working

Staff in their twenties and thirties are driving an exodus of white-co

By Riya Makwana
20 May 2023 · 12:00pm

- Accelerated changes in the utility of home > domestic boundaries' negotiations

- Small housing and shared housing arrangements in the PRS not suitable for WFH

- Space demand >< rising property prices in large cities and their suburbs despite accumulated uncertainty

- Post-pandemic (or pandemic-resilient) housing: adaptive space, improved flexibility and resilience

- Affordability, quality and tenure security more than ever on top of the policy agenda

(© Philippe Ruault - www.lacatonvassal.com)

- Hybrid work legitimates discourses based on urban proximity, densification and mixed-use

- Relocations in the continuity of pre-pandemic trends (increase: second homes; metropolitan suburbs)

- Densification/mixed-use > attractive environments for homeworkers worsening socio-spatial inequalities with lower-income neighbourhoods

- Controversy on proximity concepts (15')

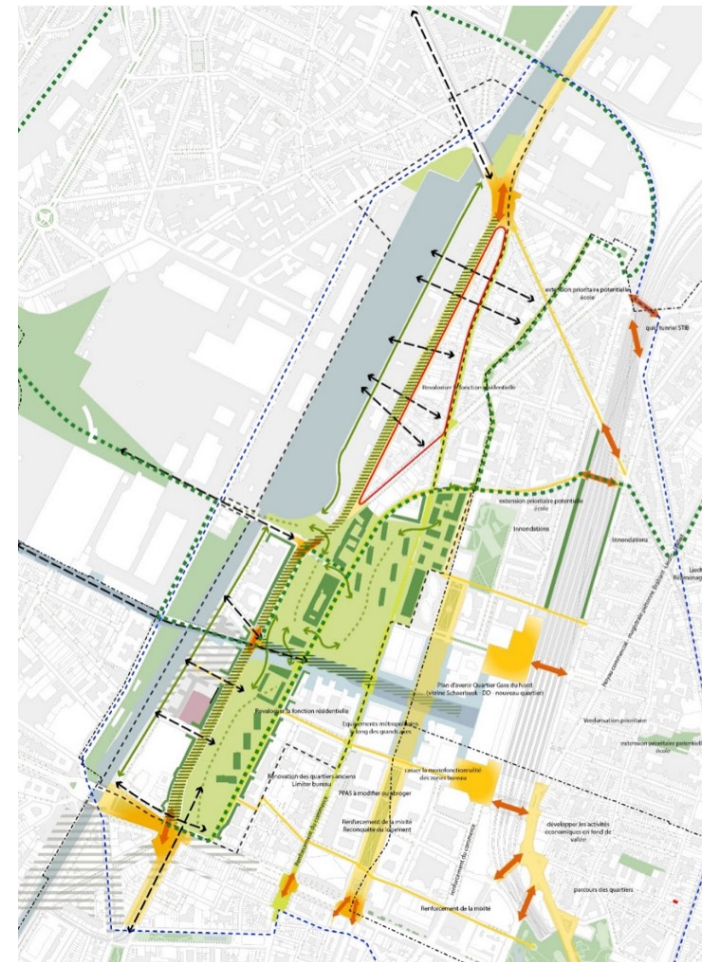(Brussels' Northern district – ZIN exemplary project)

- Post-pandemic city resilient to shocks and adaptive

- Improve economic, social and physical conditions

- Need for public health and housing provision policy

- Advocacy for planning systems that embrace complexity, uncertainty and adaptivity

(Northern district – Perspective.brussels, 2021)

- WFH and Covid-19 conceptualisations

- Urban housing provision: policy responses, instruments, typologies

- WFH-oriented planning: alternatives, challenge the back-to-the-status-quo

- WFH : any kind of work beyond digital work, including unpaid domestic work > reintegrate different kinds of work into different kinds of housing

- WFH during the pandemic = upscaling of first-generation telework using digital innovations > Upscaling role of Covid-19

- Covid-19 v. accumulated shocks and crises > prospective tools to discuss long-term structural effects on living and working in cities

- Live-work paradigms reinforced and Covid-19 as short-term catalyser> long-term changes and their institutionalisation across different contexts?
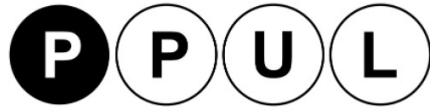
- Compare actors' policy responses to accumulated uncertainties in terms of housing provision in different housing systems

- Explore how the pandemic may enable design principles and regulations that foster housing quality and resilience

- WFH effects on housing provision in the context of shrinking domesticities

- New urban housing typologies that address health, space, flexibility,… issues

- Investigate the opportunities and risks of WFH-oriented planning and urban regeneration strategies centred on remote workers (inequalities, urban commodification).

- Explore alternative ways of planning post-pandemic or pandemic-resilient cities in different planning regimes.

- Challenge the 'back to status quo' assumption and improve knowledge of the 'post-pandemic' geography of urban (and metropolitan) living and working

- Identify possible reallocations of capital in second-tier cities and regions – as observed during the Spanish Flu – to discuss possible inequalities' mitigation

Thank you