

Urban Planning, Land Governance, and Housing Affordability: A Science-Mapping Review of Recent Literature

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Abstract

Housing affordability remains a major challenge for cities and is closely linked to the ways in which urban land and planning systems are governed. Although research on land governance and affordable housing has grown rapidly, the literature is dispersed across disciplines and lacks a clear overview of its thematic organisation. This study provides a bibliometric review of recent research connecting urban planning, land governance, and affordable housing in order to clarify how the field has evolved and how its core themes are structured. The analysis is based on 356 peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in the Web of Science Core Collection and published between 2016 and 2025. Using performance analysis and science-mapping techniques implemented through Biblioshiny and VOSviewer, the study examines publication trends, thematic patterns, and keyword relationships. The findings show a strong rise in publication output after 2020, indicating growing scholarly attention to housing affordability as a central urban policy issue. Keyword co-occurrence analysis identifies several related thematic clusters focused on urban planning, housing policy, land use regulation, governance, and social outcomes, with urban planning acting as an important connecting theme. Temporal analysis suggests a gradual shift from a primary focus on regulatory tools towards greater attention to governance capacity, equity, and sustainability. The study highlights both the progress made in this research area and the need for better conceptual integration and wider geographic representation in future work.

Keywords: Land governance, affordable housing, urban planning, housing policy, bibliometric review

1. Introduction

Housing affordability is a complex issue that is facing modern cities. The concomitant forces of rapid urbanisation, demographic changes and the growing financialisation of the land and housing markets have increased the pressure on the urban land systems, thus contributing to the intensification of socio-spatial inequality and reduced access to decent housing by households with lower and middle income. Therefore, land governance has acquired a new status as a central policy arena wherein states and local authorities strive to define the outcomes of housing, control the process of development, and coordinate market relations with social goals.

The study in the field of land governance and affordable housing has continued to develop over the last forty years, characterised by an increasingly interdisciplinary scope and conceptual pluralism. The prevailing interests of market failure, state intervention, and spatial efficiency were found in the early scholarship, much of which was based on

welfare economics, urban growth theory, and the role of the state in providing housing. Gradually, the literature expanded to include the views of urban sociology, political economy, environmental planning, and governance studies, marking a progressive shift to a less economically defined perspective (Haghani et al., 2023; Ye et al., 2024). The present bibliometric data confirms the further growth of the number of publications, the number of collaborators worldwide, and the development of interest in topics like affordable houses, land-use management, and integrated urban planning, and a growing scope of concerns on resilience, smart cities, and green urban spaces (Sharifi, 2023; Sharifi et al., 2025).

This intellectual development is symbolic of the larger changes in the sphere of the policy of urban development. Instead of direct allocation of state housing as a major approach, modern policy regimes are directed more towards influencing the affordability of housing by use of a combination of planning tools, regulatory measures, and land value management systems. Inclusionary zoning,



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negotiated development obligations, and land-use regulation are some of the techniques that are most commonly conceptualised as methods to capture land value created by market forces and redirect it to the production of affordable housing and other broader social good. This change is reflected in the academic literature, which records an increase in the focus on governance-oriented strategies aimed at harmonising the objectives of private development incentives and social inclusion (Mekawy, 2014; Pawson et al., 2020; Rahmawati et al., 2025).

Simultaneously, academic studies emphasise the fact that the effectiveness of land governance systems is highly dependent on the situational aspects. Both comparative and governance-focused questions always highlight that results are shaped not only by the structure of planning tools, but also by institutional strengths, regulatory consistency, administrative integration, and the local political-economic environment (Krawchenko & Tomaney, 2023). Additional critical analysis challenges the dominant belief that land-use regulation is a sure-footed solution to affordability and argues that poorly designed or inadequately realised regulatory measures can actually put a boundary around housing supply, further increasing cost stress, particularly on households with lower incomes (Ikeda, 2018). The literature suggests that policy instruments merely being there is not enough but rather the level of active and strategic implementation of the tools in specific governance environments is what counts (Debrunner & Hartmann, 2020).

Noting the expanding and ever more sophisticated research streams, reviews to date show that the literature on land governance and affordable housing continues to have what appear to be gaps and unevenness of various kinds. While the volume of research has become more global, the predominant viewpoints remain those of the developed economies, particularly North America and Europe (Galster & Lee, 2021). Empirical research is often based on official statistics and standard datasets, while the more unconventional datasets, particularly spatial analytics and big data, remain largely untapped, especially with respect to informal land and housing markets in rapidly urbanising areas (Kamruzzaman et al., 2025). Furthermore, many of these studies analyse the technical, economic, or

social dimensions in isolation, without governance, institutional, or spatial dimensions, and the integration of these into coherent frameworks (Silva et al., 2024; Sohaimi et al., 2025).

Along with these trends, the trends of scientific collaboration and thematic organisation suggest structural fragmentation of the field. The literature on land governance and affordable housing is spread with a variety of disciplinary outlets, thus hindering knowledge building cumulatively and the emerging theory of integration (Lang et al., 2020). Even though there is some interdisciplinary citation, it is still quite imbalanced; few of thematic groups manage to successfully connect the fields of planning, governance, and housing policy (LePere-Schloop & Nesbit, 2023). Bibliometric studies also reveal strongly networked collaboration patterns, where productivity and influence of research and citation are concentrated in a small set of countries and institutions, potentially influencing the creation of a dominant research agenda and excluding locally-based views of underrepresented regions (Adediran et al., 2024; Sohaimi et al., 2024).

Considering this situation, bibliometric and science-map techniques offer a structured way to evaluate the structure, development, and organisation of those research areas that are characterised by a rapid development and growing complexity. Bibliometric techniques can provide the information that cannot be obtained through narrative and thematic reviews, as the large volumes of literature can be synthesised in a transparent and reproducible way by quantitatively analysing publication trends, thematic structures, and collaboration networks (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015).

This study responds to these gaps by conducting a comprehensive bibliometric review of research linking urban planning, land governance, and affordable housing. Focusing on peer-reviewed journal literature indexed in the Web of Science Core Collection between 2016 and 2025, the study aims to clarify how the field has evolved, how its core themes are structured, and how patterns of scholarly collaboration shape knowledge integration. Specifically, it addresses the following research questions:

RQ1. How has research on land governance and affordable housing in urban planning evolved in



terms of publication growth and scholarly output over time?

RQ2. What are the dominant themes and conceptual structures characterising the literature Zupic on land governance and affordable housing?

RQ3. How is the research field organised in terms of collaboration patterns and thematic connections, and what does this imply for knowledge integration in urban planning research?

2. Method

2.1 Research design

This study will use a bibliometric review along with science-mapping methodology to critically examine the organisational structure, path of development, and thematic focus of scholarly research that links urban planning, land governance, and affordable housing. Bibliometric methods are especially best suited to synthesising broad and interdisciplinary bodies of literature, since they can be used to conduct quantitatively robust analyses of patterns of publication, intellectual buildings, collaborative networks, and thematic connexions, based on bibliographic metadata as opposed to anecdotal opinion (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015)

2.2 Data source and search strategy

Bibliographic data in the current research were only found in the Web of Science Core Collection which is an index that is considered as having strict inclusion criteria of journals and is widely used in both citation-based and network-based bibliometric research. A topic search was done and this provided keywords that are found in the title of articles, abstract, and other keywords provided by the authors. The search query was developed based on the conceptual breadth and relevance to the theme and combines the terms related to planning and land with those related to the housing policy:

(“urban land governance” OR “land governance” OR “urban land policy” OR “land administration” OR “land use planning” OR “urban planning” OR “spatial planning”) AND (“affordable housing” OR “social housing” OR “low-income housing” OR “housing policy”)

This formulation allowed the acquisition of a highly comprehensive but narrowed down corpus of literature that was relevant to the goals of the study

without constraining the analysis to very narrow sub-domains.

2.3 Inclusion criteria and dataset refinement

To ensure analytical consistency and comparability, the study included only peer-reviewed Articles and Review Articles published in English. The temporal scope was limited to the period 2016-2025 in order to capture recent developments and contemporary research trajectories. Even though such a search interface only allowed search in a decennial window, some Early Access records with a date in the year 2026 or later were identified during the data extraction and were later removed in order to maintain a similar temporal frame. After the screening and refinement, the corpus obtained was of sufficient size, with 356 documents, and the content was thematically cohesive to perform a comprehensive bibliometric analysis.

2.4 Data processing and analytical tools

The Web of Science exported bibliographic records in simple-text form, including those in full record and those cited. The bibliometrix package in R, which offers an open and reproducible method of bibliometric exploration and science mapping, was used to conduct data preprocessing and the further analysis (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). Bibliometrix along with its web-based interface Biblioshiny were used to clean and perform descriptive performance analysis and thematic evolution analysis. To build and visualise bibliometric networks using distance-based mapping methods, VOSviewer was used (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Before the construction of the network, author keywords were vetted and standardised to reduce fragmentation in case of the presence of synonymous words and slight deviations in lexicon, which improved the stability and interpretability of the resulting thematic groups.

2.5 Bibliometric analysis techniques

The analysis followed a multi-stage workflow combining performance analysis with science-mapping techniques. First, performance analysis was conducted to examine annual publication trends, leading journals, productive authors, and country-level research contributions, providing an overview of the growth and geographic distribution of the field (Donthu et al., 2021). Second, keyword co-occurrence analysis was applied to identify the

conceptual structure of the literature. Author keywords were analysed using full counting, with a minimum occurrence threshold applied to exclude infrequently used terms. Third, overlay visualisation and thematic evolution analysis were employed to examine temporal shifts in research focus by mapping average publication years onto keyword networks, following established science-mapping procedures (Cobo et al., 2011). Where appropriate, co-citation analysis of sources and authors was conducted to identify influential works and the intellectual foundations underpinning the field (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010).

3. Results

The empirical findings of the bibliometric and science-mapping analysis are derived from a final dataset of 356 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2016 and 2025. Consistent with established bibliometric reporting practices, the

results are organised into descriptive and performance analysis, followed by conceptual structure and temporal pattern analysis (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015).

3.1 Annual scientific production and source distribution

Figure 1 illustrates annual scientific production related to urban planning, land governance, and affordable housing over the study period. Publication output remains relatively limited between 2016 and 2018, followed by a steady increase from 2019 onwards. A pronounced acceleration is evident after 2020, with the highest number of publications recorded in the most recent years. This trend indicates sustained expansion of scholarly output and growing academic attention to land governance and housing affordability in urban planning research.

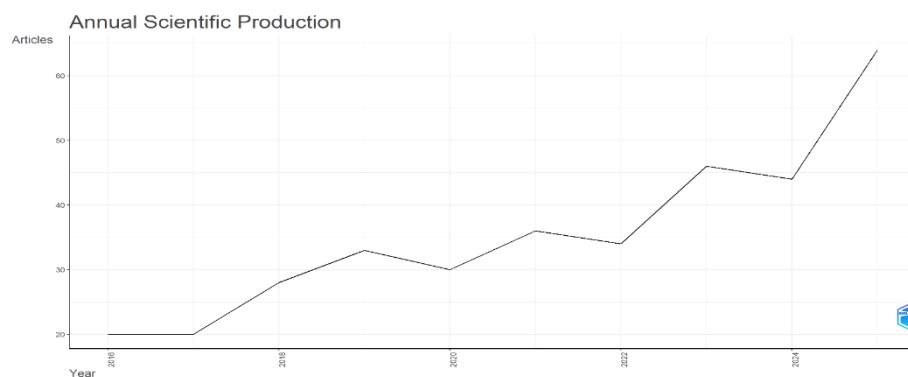


Figure 1. Annual scientific production on land governance and affordable housing (2016–2025).

Table 1 presents the most relevant journals contributing to this body of literature. The results reveal a strong concentration of publications in a limited number of interdisciplinary outlets. *Sustainability* emerges as the most prolific source, followed by *Land Use Policy*, *Cities*, *Urban Studies*, *Habitat International*, and the *Journal of Housing*

and the Built Environment. Collectively, these journals account for a substantial proportion of total publications, indicating that research on land governance and affordable housing is primarily situated at the intersection of urban planning, land use, housing policy, and sustainability studies rather than in narrowly specialised disciplinary journals.

Table 1. Most relevant journals in land governance and affordable housing research.

Sources	Articles
SUSTAINABILITY	16
LAND USE POLICY	12
URBAN STUDIES	12
CITIES	10
HABITAT INTERNATIONAL	9
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HOUSING MARKETS AND ANALYSIS	9
LAND	9
URBAN PLANNING	9
CIUDAD Y TERRITORIO-ESTUDIOS TERRITORIALES-CYTET	7
JOURNAL OF HOUSING AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT	7

3.2 Author productivity and geographic distribution

Author productivity analysis indicates a dispersed authorship structure. As shown in Table 2, the most productive authors contribute a relatively small

number of publications each, and no single author or tightly connected group dominates the field. This pattern reflects a decentralised research community, characteristic of an interdisciplinary domain that is still consolidating its intellectual foundations.

Table 2. Most productive authors in land governance and affordable housing research.

Author	Articles	Articles Fractionalized	Author	Articles	Articles Fractionalized
BRUYNEEL G	3	0.75	SCHOONJANS Y	3	0.75
DE SMET A	3	0.75	ALVAREZ PR	2	0.33
GILES-CORTI B	3	0.55	ANTONELLO IT	2	0.83
HANSSON AG	3	2.25	ASLAN AS	2	1.50
PAK B	3	0.75	AYD	2	0.63

Country-level scientific production is reported in Table 3. While research output spans a wide range of countries, it remains unevenly distributed. The United States, the United Kingdom, China, and several Western European countries account for the largest shares of publications. In contrast,

contributions from Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia are comparatively limited. This distribution highlights a notable regional concentration in knowledge production despite the global relevance of land governance and housing affordability challenges.

Table 3. Country-level scientific production.

Country	Freq	Country	Freq
USA	96	AUSTRALIA	28
CHINA	54	MEXICO	26
UK	46	GERMANY	22
BRAZIL	44	CHILE	19
SPAIN	40	ITALY	19

3.3 Conceptual structure of the literature

The literature conceptual framework was analysed by a key word co-occurrence analysis using author-supplied keywords. The resulting network is shown in figure 2 and was developed with full counting and an enforced minimum occurrence threshold to remove terms that are used infrequently. The network reveals some different and at the same time interrelated thematic groups.

A central cluster organised around *urban planning* occupies a prominent bridging position, linking multiple research streams. Closely connected to this core are clusters centred on *affordable housing* and *housing policy*, reflecting the prominence of policy-oriented approaches to housing provision in

planning research. Another cluster groups themes related to *land use planning*, *sustainability*, and *real estate*, highlighting the role of spatial regulation and land markets in shaping affordability outcomes. Additional clusters capture governance- and outcome-oriented themes, including *public policy*, *urban regeneration*, *segregation*, and *quality of life*, indicating increasing attention to social and redistributive dimensions of urban development.

Spatial organisation of the network means that, despite the existence of conceptual connexions between clusters, studies relating to planning tools, governance regimes and housing performance often proceed in parallel lines as opposed to being incorporated in an entirely integrated analytical system.

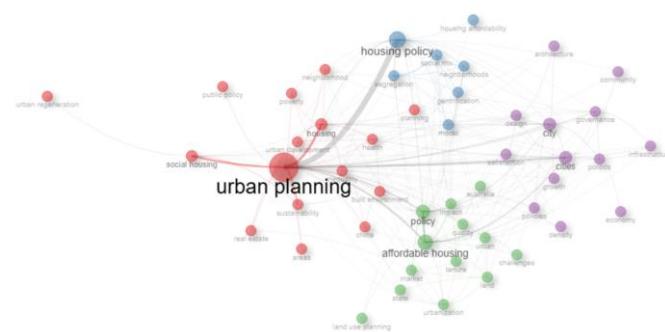


Figure 2. Keyword co-occurrence network of land governance and affordable housing research.

3.4 Temporal patterns and overlay visualisation

The temporal changes in the focus of research were examined through overlay visualisation. The overlay map is shown in Figure 3, where the colour schemes of key words represent the mean years of publication. Older publications are predominantly linked with planning instruments, land use regulation, and regulatory frameworks, whereas contemporary studies increasingly foreground governance capacity, institutional coordination, social equity, and sustainability-oriented themes.

The overlay analysis indicates that affordable housing has moved closer to the centre of the research field over time, with strengthening linkages to governance and sustainability-oriented concepts in the later period. Nevertheless, the results suggest that planning, governance, and affordability themes continue to evolve along partially parallel trajectories rather than converging into a single, unified conceptual structure.

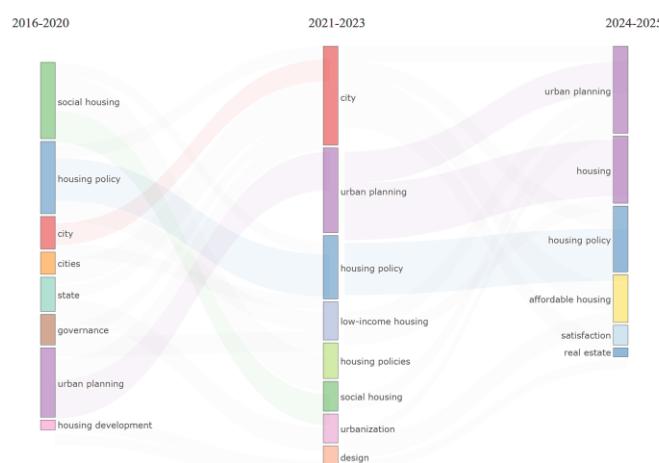


Figure 3. Overlay visualisation of research themes (2016–2025).

3.5 VOSviewer-based validation of conceptual structure

To offer a visual confirmation of the conceptual framework determined with the help of Biblioshiny, a keyword co-occurrence network was created with

author keywords independently with VOSviewer. Figure 4 presents the resulting network. Consistent with the primary bibliometric analysis, *urban planning* occupies a central position, functioning as a key connector between clusters related to *housing*

policy, affordable housing, land use planning, and sustainability.

Distinct groupings around *social housing, urban regeneration, public policy, and quality of life* further illustrate the policy- and outcome-oriented dimensions of the field. While strong intra-cluster

linkages are evident, inter-cluster connections remain uneven, reinforcing the observation that the literature exhibits partial rather than comprehensive integration across planning, governance, and housing research domains. Overall, the VOSviewer visualisation corroborates the conceptual patterns identified through the primary bibliometric analysis.

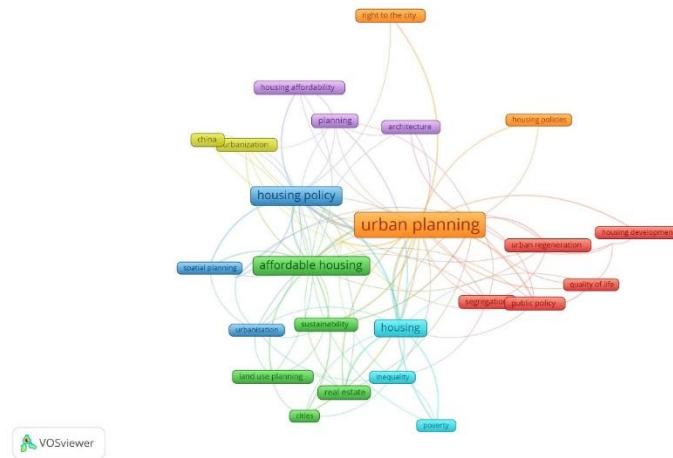


Figure 4. Keyword co-occurrence network based on author keywords (VOSviewer).

4. Discussion

The bibliometric results provide a structured overview of how research on urban planning, land governance, and affordable housing has developed over the past decade and allow interpretive insights to be drawn regarding the organisation, maturity, and limitations of the field. The findings indicate a rapidly growing but continuously divided research field, through conceptual diversification overcame integrative theoretical growth (Haghani et al., 2023; Ye et al., 2024).

The strong growth in publication output after 2020 suggests that housing affordability has increasingly been treated as a central urban policy concern rather than a peripheral planning issue. This pattern aligns with recent studies highlighting the growing prominence of affordability, land use regulation, and integrated planning in urban scholarship, alongside emerging attention to resilience, smart cities, and green urban spaces (Sharifi, 2023; Ye et al., 2024). The concentration of publications in a small set of interdisciplinary journals further indicates that the field is not anchored in a single disciplinary tradition, but instead spans urban planning, land use

policy, housing studies, governance research, and sustainability-oriented scholarship (Haghani et al., 2023).

The dispersed authorship structure reinforces the interpretation of an evolving research community that is still consolidating its conceptual foundations. In contrast to mature domains characterised by stable epistemic cores, scholarship on land governance and affordable housing appears to be shaped by multiple, loosely connected research streams. This pattern is consistent with evidence that interdisciplinary housing and planning literatures often remain distributed across disciplines and outlets, limiting consolidation and cumulative theory building (Lang et al., 2020; LePere-Schloop & Nesbit, 2023).

The conceptual structure analysis highlights both progress and persistent disconnection. The identification of clusters focused on planning instruments, land governance and institutions, housing affordability outcomes, and sustainability suggests a broadening agenda that increasingly recognises the multi-dimensional nature of housing challenges. However, partial separation between these clusters indicates that analytical integration



remains limited, with planning-oriented studies emphasising regulatory tools and spatial controls, governance-focused research foregrounding institutional arrangements and administrative capacity, and housing-focused studies prioritising affordability and equity outcomes (Mekawy, 2014; Pawson et al., 2020). This thematic separation reflects wider observations that interdisciplinary citation occurs but remains uneven, with only certain strands effectively bridging planning, policy, and governance domains (Lang et al., 2020; LePere-Schloop & Nesbit, 2023).

This structure helps explain why debates over the effectiveness of planning and governance interventions remain contested. The literature documents that policy instruments intended to improve affordability, such as land use regulation and related planning tools, can produce divergent outcomes across contexts, and in some cases may constrain supply and intensify cost pressures if design and implementation are weak (Ikeda, 2018). Related work emphasises that the presence of instruments alone is insufficient, and that outcomes depend on strategic activation, enforcement capacity, and negotiation dynamics in specific governance settings (Debrunner & Hartmann, 2020). These arguments reinforce the importance of treating affordability outcomes as contingent on the interaction between instruments, institutions, and local political economy rather than as direct products of formal policy design (Krawchenko & Tomaney, 2023).

The thematic evolution analysis indicates gradual conceptual maturation. Earlier research was more strongly oriented towards technical planning tools and regulatory design, whereas more recent work increasingly foregrounds governance capacity, institutional coordination, and social outcomes. This trajectory aligns with the broader shift in the literature from direct public provision towards planning-based and governance-oriented approaches that seek to align market dynamics with social objectives (Mekawy, 2014; Pawson et al., 2020). The increasing linkage between affordable housing and sustainability-related themes also reflects a widening agenda that connects affordability with inclusive and resilient urban development concerns (Sharifi, 2023). At the same time, the persistence of partially parallel thematic

trajectories suggests that the field has expanded in scope without fully converging into integrated analytical models (Lang et al., 2020; LePere-Schloop & Nesbit, 2023).

Geographic concentration in research output represents an additional limitation for knowledge development. Consistent with prior reviews, the dominance of publications from North America, Western Europe, and other high-income contexts raises concerns about the generalisability of prevailing analytical frameworks, particularly when affordability pressures are severe in rapidly urbanising regions that remain underrepresented in the literature (Galster & Lee, 2021; Sohaimi et al., 2024). Evidence from bibliometric studies similarly indicates that research productivity and collaboration influence remain concentrated among a limited set of countries and institutions, which can shape research agendas and methodological norms (Adediran et al., 2024; Sohaimi et al., 2024). This concentration may limit the incorporation of locally grounded perspectives on informal land markets, hybrid governance arrangements, and data-constrained policy environments that are central to affordability challenges in many regions.

Collaboration patterns and thematic organisation further suggest constraints on cumulative knowledge building. Governance scholarship argues that collaborative and multi-level governance frameworks can facilitate cross-boundary learning and coordination, potentially supporting integration across planning, governance, and housing policy domains (Emerson et al., 2012). However, empirical critiques caution that collaborative arrangements may privilege certain actors and perspectives, reproducing existing power asymmetries in both policymaking and knowledge production (Berglund-Snodgrass et al., 2021). These considerations are relevant given the observed regional concentration of scholarly output and the partial separation between thematic clusters, indicating that integration is shaped by both intellectual and structural factors (Lang et al., 2020; Sohaimi et al., 2024).

Methodologically, the findings demonstrate the utility of bibliometric and science-mapping approaches for assessing the structure and evolution of complex research fields. By systematically mapping publication trends, thematic structures, and



collaboration networks, bibliometric analysis reveals patterns that are difficult to capture through narrative reviews alone and supports a more transparent and reproducible synthesis (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015). At the same time, the broader review literature highlights that reliance on conventional datasets and established analytical approaches can limit understanding of informal or data-poor contexts, reinforcing the need for complementary mixed-method and comparative research designs (Kamruzzaman et al., 2025; Silva et al., 2024; Sohaimi et al., 2025).

It indicates that research on land governance and affordable housing has moved beyond narrow economic framings and purely technical planning solutions towards broader governance-oriented perspectives. However, the field continues to face challenges in integrating planning instruments, institutional processes, and affordability outcomes in coherent analytical frameworks and in extending empirical coverage beyond dominant high-income research contexts (Galster & Lee, 2021; Krawchenko & Tomaney, 2023). Addressing these gaps is central to strengthening both the analytical coherence and policy relevance of future scholarship.

5. Implications

Building on the bibliometric results and their interpretation in the preceding discussion, this section outlines the key implications of the study for theory development, policy and practice, and future research on land governance and affordable housing in urban planning.

5.1 Conceptual and theoretical implications

The findings highlight the need for stronger conceptual integration across planning, governance, and housing affordability literatures. Although the field has expanded beyond narrowly defined economic and technical approaches, research remains organised around partially disconnected thematic clusters. This suggests that existing analytical frameworks insufficiently capture the interactions between planning instruments, institutional arrangements, and housing outcomes. Future conceptual work should therefore move beyond instrument-centred models and develop integrative frameworks that explicitly link regulatory design, governance capacity, and market

dynamics to affordability outcomes (Krawchenko & Tomaney, 2023; Mekawy, 2014; Pawson et al., 2020). Such frameworks would enable more systematic comparison across contexts and help reconcile divergent empirical findings regarding the effectiveness of land governance interventions (Debrunner & Hartmann, 2020; Ikeda, 2018).

5.2 Policy and governance implications

From a policy perspective, the results underscore that land governance mechanisms cannot be assessed in isolation from their institutional and political-economic contexts. The prominence of governance-oriented themes in recent literature suggests that factors such as administrative capacity, inter-agency coordination, transparency, and stakeholder engagement are critical to translating planning instruments into tangible affordability outcomes. Policymakers should therefore complement regulatory tools, such as inclusionary zoning or negotiated development obligations, with measures that strengthen institutional coherence and implementation capacity (Krawchenko & Tomaney, 2023; Pawson et al., 2020). The geographic concentration of existing research further implies that policy lessons derived from high-income contexts may not be readily transferable to rapidly urbanising regions, highlighting the importance of context-sensitive policy design and locally grounded governance arrangements (Galster & Lee, 2021; Sohaimi et al., 2024).

5.3 Implications for future research

The study also points to several priorities for future research. Greater empirical attention is needed in underrepresented regions, particularly in Africa, South Asia, and Latin America, where affordability challenges intersect with informal land markets and hybrid governance structures. Methodologically, combining bibliometric approaches with comparative case studies and mixed-method designs could improve understanding of how governance mechanisms operate in practice and under varying institutional conditions (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015). Finally, the increasing linkage between affordability and sustainability-related themes suggests scope for interdisciplinary research that examines trade-offs and synergies between social equity, environmental objectives, and



economic feasibility in urban land and housing policy (Sharifi, 2023).

6. Conclusion

Research on urban planning, land governance, and affordable housing has expanded substantially over the past decade, reflecting the growing salience of housing affordability as a central urban policy challenge. Through a bibliometric and science-mapping analysis of 356 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2016 and 2025, this study provides a systematic assessment of how this interdisciplinary research field has evolved, how its core themes are structured, and how patterns of scholarly collaboration shape knowledge integration. The findings reveal sustained growth in publication output, increasing thematic diversification, and stronger engagement with governance- and sustainability-oriented perspectives, confirming a broader shift away from narrowly defined technical or economic approaches towards more institutionally and socially informed analyses (Haghani et al., 2023; Sharifi, 2023; Ye et al., 2024).

Simultaneously, the results also highlight the structural and conceptual issues that have remained persistent and are still hampering the clear academic progress. Although the thematic range of research has been broadened, it is still arranged in partially disjointed groups. The analysis of planning tools, land management schemes, and affordability rates of housing is normally done in tandem and not as a subject of scrutinised analytical tools. Although urban planning is often discussed as a mediating notion, the connexions between the mechanisms of governance and the empirically quantifiable outcomes of affordability are not evenly introduced. Such fragmentation, thus, inhibits the possible cumulative knowledge construction, and the ability of the literature to offer consistent advice on policy construction and implementation in various urban settings.

Geographic concentration in research output further reinforces these limitations. Although the field has become increasingly international, perspectives from high-income countries continue to dominate scholarly production and citation influence. Regions experiencing the most acute housing affordability pressures, particularly in parts of Asia, Africa, and

Latin America, remain under-represented. This imbalance raises important concerns regarding the generalisability of prevailing conceptual frameworks and policy prescriptions, as governance arrangements, land markets, and institutional capacities vary significantly across development contexts (Galster & Lee, 2021; Sohaimi et al., 2024).

The current study has a number of limitations that should be given a close attention. To begin with, the literature analysis will be limited to peer-reviewed journal publications listed in the Web of Science Core Collection. Although this method ensures high quality control and reliability of citation, it is bound to inadequately represent geographically-specific research published in non-indexed journals, policy reports, or practitioner-focused sources. Second, bibliometric procedures are not aimed at evaluating the empirical quality, methodology, or policy effectiveness of specific studies; they are primarily meant to identify structural, relational, and thematic patterns in the literature. The study limitations must, therefore, be used to make sense of the study results.

Despite the limitations mentioned above, this research has a substantive input in that it brings a clear, repeatable, and full synthesis of the recent scholarly works, which explains the intellectual framework of land governance and affordable housing in urban planning. The future study would be enhanced through a more sound conceptual synthesis across the spheres of planning, governance, and housing policy, through the broadening of geographic focus, and through the implementation of complementary empirical methodologies that could trace institutional and regulatory processes to the realms of affordability. These methodological and conceptual improvements are essential to enhance the analytical and policy relevance of the research that addresses one of the most demanding issues of the modern urban setting.

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