Regulating urban office provision: a study of the ebb and flow of regimes of urbanisation in Amsterdam and Frankfurt am Main, 1945-2000

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1 INTRODUCTION

Frankfurt am Main and Amsterdam as office cities

1.1 Office structures versus office planning in Frankfurt and Amsterdam: a first look

Visitors to the inner city of Frankfurt am Main find themselves looking up most of the time – up at the crown of the DG Bank headquarters (Kronenhaus), or up at the towers of the Deutsche Bank, to name just two of the many office colossuses that dominate the urban structure. Despite its impressive skyline, the city of Frankfurt, with its 650,000 inhabitants, is only a middle-sized German city. It is located in the centre of the country, at the crossroads of the main north-south and east-west highways. It is part of the Rhine-Main conurbation in the southern part of the Land (State) of Hesse (see figures 1.1 and 1.3 on pages 2 and 4). This region has developed into one of Europe’s major economic growth regions. The conurbation includes Wiesbaden, Darmstadt, and Offenbach am Main in the Land of Hesse, Aschaffenburg in the Land of Bavaria, and Mainz in the Land of Rhineland-Palatinate. The part that is located in Hesse occupies only 10 percent of the state’s territory, but accommodates 40 percent of its inhabitants and over 50 percent of its employed. The whole region accommodated 5.26 million people in 2001.

Within Frankfurt’s inner city, the persistent pressure exerted by offices on the built-up area is clear: At many locations across the city, big plots of land are ready for new development. Existing real estate has been demolished, and alongside the remaining houses, hoisting cranes are ready to start the construction of yet another enormous office building. It is only in the small historical centre – the Altstadt – that office towers do not dominate the direct surroundings. But because of the limited size of the Altstadt, the glass towers are never out of sight, inevitably forcing upon the visitor the image of Frankfurt as an economic centre.

Visitors to the inner city of Amsterdam are in for a completely different experience. They will not find high-rise office blocks, but mixed residential, leisure, and retail areas where the apartment blocks are no more than five storeys high.

1 In the remainder of this book, the city of Frankfurt am Main will be referred to as Frankfurt.
Amsterdam (735,000 inhabitants) is the capital of the Netherlands, and part of the northern wing of the Randstad – the built-up area of the western Netherlands. The Randstad, which includes the cities of Rotterdam, Utrecht, and The Hague, is the country’s main economic centre. Its northern wing, of which Amsterdam and Utrecht are a component, houses the main parts of the Dutch service economy as well as the airport-related distribution complex, while the southern part specialises in harbour-related trade and industry (Rotterdam) and government (The Hague). Since 1945, the city of Amsterdam has developed into a node of national and international culture and trade, and has become a multicultural metropolis and a centre for international financial capital.

Despite the relative importance of Amsterdam as a financial centre, the bigger offices in Amsterdam’s city centre – such as the seat of De Nederlandsche Bank on Frederiksplein – seem incidental. In the refurbished canal belt of the large
historical inner city, with its seventeenth-century architecture, the corporate suits fill the streets, signalling the presence of a small office cluster, which is housed in small but impressive offices in historical buildings along the main canals. However, the big headquarter offices will not be found here. For those, the visitor will have to travel to the edge of the city, where Amsterdam is building its business centre – or centres, one should say: Orderly, planned office locations are in full development along the Amsterdam beltway (A10) – namely Zuidas, Westas, Telepoort/Sloterdijk, and Diemen – and along the A2 highway to Utrecht (Amstel 1, 2 and 3) (see figure 1.2).

At Frankfurt's urban edge, such orderly, planned office locations (e.g., Eschborn and Frankfurt-Niederrad, see figure 1.3) are outnumbered by ad hoc and large-scale developments along the exit roads from the inner city to the airport. The developments in the metropolitan periphery and the suburbs correspond somewhat more in Amsterdam and Frankfurt, especially closer to the airport, which in both cases is situated approximately 10 kilometres to the southwest of the city. In both urban regions, the periphery is the place for smaller, monofunctional, and
hypermodern office parks that house the headquarters of companies in software, data processing, business services, or trade.

In line with the international economic transformation, the economic structure in both Amsterdam and Frankfurt has undergone considerable restructuring since the beginning of the 1970s. In both cities, the rise of employment in the service sector has countered the decline of industry from about 30 percent of total employment in the 1960s to roughly 6 (Amsterdam) and 9 (Frankfurt) percent at the present time. In Frankfurt, the chemical industries – with
Hoechst as historically the main component – have always been the driver of industrial development, and they still employ almost 50 percent of the city's industrial workers. Recently, Hoechst has suburbanised, and the life-sciences cluster around Hoechst Marion Roussel has developed its base in Kronberg (see Freund, 2002: 133). The regional statistics show that industry is still a substantial employer in the Rhine-Main region, with 23 percent of the employed. The contrast with the Amsterdam region is striking: Here, only 8 percent of the employed are active in industry, only slightly more than the percentage in the city of Amsterdam (6 percent). The main industrial cluster in Amsterdam is the publishing, printing, and paper industry, which has grown despite the decline of the other industrial sectors and currently employs more than a third of Amsterdam's industrial workers.

In both Amsterdam and Frankfurt, the international airport is a major source of employment, both with regards to direct employment at the airport (62,000 employees at Frankfurt Airport (Freund, 2002), and 54,000 employees at Schiphol Amsterdam Airport in 2002) and with regards to airport-related businesses settlements along main infrastructure in the region. In both the Rhine-Main region and the Amsterdam region, important clusters of airport-related businesses settled down from the 1970s onward, especially in suburban business parks located close to the main highways (for instance, Hoofddorp, Schiphol Rijk, and the Amsterdam Harbour in the Amsterdam Region, and Eschborn and Niederrad in the Rhine Main region).

As Tables 1.1 and 1.2 indicate, both Amsterdam and Frankfurt are service sector oriented cities. Both cities profited from the general economic transition from industrial production to service provision in the Western world during the 1970s. Both cities and regions have strong clusters in financial and business services, with banking being the main trigger of development in especially the city of Frankfurt. In 1996, a total of 230,000 people (ca. 54 percent of all those employed in the city) were working in offices in Frankfurt. In 2000, 215,600 people (36 percent of all those employed in the city) were employed in finance, real estate, and business services. Currently, 69,000 people work in one of the 349 banks located in the city of Frankfurt, including the German and European Central Banks, making it one of Europe's major banking cities. A "global city," according to Krätke (1995), especially because 201 of these banks are foreign, indicating the importance of Frankfurt as an international financial node, the most important European financial centre after London and Zurich. The city accommodates, in

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1 As a result of international mergers, Hoechst AG now is part of Arelis AG, which has its headquarters in Strasbourg. The estate in Frankfurt is now called Industriepark Hoechst.
Regulating Urban Office Provision

Table 1.1 Economic development in the municipalities of Amsterdam and Frankfort a.M.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>City of Amsterdam</th>
<th>City of Frankfort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>77,144</td>
<td>24,229 (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>51,160</td>
<td>55,630 (109)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Services</td>
<td>22,404</td>
<td>88,949 (397)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Services</td>
<td>36,593</td>
<td>44,397 (121)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>107,001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>344,527</td>
<td>417,711</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: O+S Amsterdam (*), Statistisches Jahrbuch Frankfort am Main 1970 (**), Planungsverband Ballungsraum Frankfurt/Rhein-Main (***)

Note: total employment includes categories such as public administration, that were not included in this list

Table 1.2 Economic structures of the Amsterdam and Frankfurt region in 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Amsterdam region*</th>
<th>Frankfurt region **</th>
<th>Rhine/Main</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>79,900</td>
<td>196,391</td>
<td>455,801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>69,500</td>
<td>150,321</td>
<td>309,171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Services</td>
<td>189,900</td>
<td>200,834</td>
<td>308,266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial services</td>
<td>62,700</td>
<td>103,243</td>
<td>144,578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>100,300</td>
<td>175,161</td>
<td>424,755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>919,000</td>
<td>1,012,508</td>
<td>1,966,392</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Amsterdamse Economische Verkenningen 2002 (*), Planungsverband Ballungsraum Frankfurt/Rhein-Main (**) 

Note: total employment includes categories that were not included in this list

addition to the majority of savings and cooperative banks present in Germany, the absolute majority of investment and real-estate funds, credit card institutions, and futures banks, leaving the cities of Düsseldorf and Hamburg far behind (data obtained from Freund, 2002).

Although the numbers in Amsterdam are of a different order, they too indicate specialisation in office-related economic categories. Currently, most office space is occupied by companies in the growing cluster of business services (Boer Hartog Hooft, 2000). The whole financial cluster, thus including financial services other than banks, employs 44,000 people, and the headquarters of the main national banks are all located in Amsterdam, excluding Rabobank whose headquarters are located in Utrecht. Moreover, the Amsterdam Exchange and the Dutch Central Bank contribute to the national importance of the financial cluster in Amsterdam. However, the spatial scale of Amsterdam’s command and control functions is considerably less developed than that of Frankfurt, which, according to
Krätke (1995), makes Amsterdam a European urban region, whereas Frankfurt is a global city (see above).

The importance of office-related economic activities in both cities obviously has its repercussions both on the amount of office space in the city and on the office development cycles. The city of Frankfurt, including the adjacent municipality of Eschborn, had an estimated total of 8.8 million square meters of office space in 1996 (Plötz, 1997), and the Amsterdam region – including Schiphol Airport and the suburban municipalities of Diemen, Amstelveen, and Hoofddorp – had 5.6 million square meters of office space in 2002 (Boer Hartog Hooft, 2002). With regards to total office space, both cities can therefore be considered as medium-sized European cities, far smaller than such cities as Paris and London (Rienstra & Rietveld, 1999).

One logical question that arises after such observations is to what extent the development of the urban economic structure and its spatial manifestation in office landscapes is regulated at the local level, for instance at the platform of the local state, through strategic planning. An exercise often employed by critics of the planning profession is to compare the plans for an area with the concrete built environment. If such an empirical test of the similarities between the desired and the concrete spatial form were to be conducted in both Amsterdam and Frankfurt, the planning profession would indeed turn out inadequate and insignificant. Planners in Amsterdam, where the central business district (CBD) is located along the beltway at the urban periphery, considered the south-western part of the historical inner city as the country’s CBD until the early 1990s. Planners in Frankfurt on the other hand have changed the spatial structure plans for office development many times (from clustering, via inner city corridors, back to clustering and intensification), whereby at present the western part of the city is covered with a mishmash of big office buildings located only partly in the projected clusters or along the projected corridors.

However, this does not automatically imply that spatial regulation has failed, or that urban planning for that matter was a meaningless exercise of public power. In the light of the study of the dynamics behind urban office development, the fundamental point of departure is to gain a better understanding of the processes and dynamics behind urban change and, as a vital component of this, real-estate development.

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1 This was before the office boom of the late 1990s.
1.2 The office and urban development

A main premise of this thesis is that the processes mediating urban change partly take place through struggles on the platform of the state, over strategic plans and over planned concrete investments in urban space. These struggles and their outcomes are formative, path-shaping events in the constant evolution of a city. Struggles over office plans and concrete office developments are very interesting cases in point, because of a number of characteristics that distinguish offices from other commercial investments in the city, notably in retail and industry. These characteristics evolve over time and pose different challenges to urban planners. This section gives an overview of the office as a formative element of the urban fabric.

Before the Second World War, the office was an urban function that did not demand the full attention of urban planners. Offices were small and did not produce the negative externalities (noise, air pollution, traffic, etc.) that industry produced. Also contrary to industry, offices did not impose practical demands on the existing urban fabric, such as big greenfield sites alongside highways and waterways. And, contrary to the retail sector, the office sector seemed independent of the purchasing power of consumers, and therefore did not follow the evolution of a city's residential structure. Rather, offices were established in small inner-city clusters, and the resulting small-scale crowding out of residential functions posed no real planning problems. Moreover, the first post-war years were generally dominated by planning for the needy (overcoming the housing shortage and supporting trade and industry), and because offices were perceived as working places for limited numbers of workers, office planning had no priority.

This changed rapidly as a result of the growth of office use in the post-war era. In this period, the office replaced the factory as a symbol of "contemporary urban economic development" (Daniels, 1975: 1). First, it made an advance as a working place as a result of scale increases, specialisation, and new divisions of labour in industrial companies and the connected clustering of managerial activities. Second, it made an advance because of the growth of the service sector. Armstrong (1972) calls the growth of white-collar employment during the twentieth century a "quiet revolution" because of its gradual nature. Thus, offices in cities are illustrations of the fundamental post-war economic shift in Western capitalist countries from the production of goods to the production of services. Scale enlargements in the service industries, especially in the financial services sector, caused a spatial hierarchy in office centres to develop from the 1950s onward. At
the national level, a city or region would become the location where banks and other companies in the financial sector clustered, and from the 1960s onward within these top centres, the pressure of ever-larger offices on the urban fabric increased rapidly.

In the same period, developers and investors recognised the office as an investment object, which led to the birth and gradual growth of the office market. As Harvey (1985: 6-7) notes, this rise of investments in the “secondary circuit of capital” (the flow of capital into fixed assets) is associated with the drive of “capitalists” to move capital into the formation of longer-term assets. This usually occurs in times of over-accumulation in the primary circuit of capital (accumulation through the production and consumption of commodities), which makes investments in the secondary circuit of capital more appealing, especially in situations where “long-term, large-scale projects with respect to the creation of the built environment” are guaranteed by the state (Harvey, 1985: 7). Thus, state institutions have an important role to play in mediating the relations between the primary and secondary circuit of capital.4 In the post-war period of rapid accumulation, surplus capital began moving into the circuit of office capital. This led to the rise of a market for offices. This office market propelled the development of a more dynamic office development cycle: On the waves of national and international accumulation/over-accumulation in the primary circuit of capital, the new development of offices began to experience high peaks and deep slumps.

This research focuses on the new offices that appear in Western cities as a result of the quiet revolution, the scale enlargements in the service sectors, as well as the rise of the office market. For a long time, offices were the only centripetal

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4 Of similar importance are financial institutions that condition the flow of capital into the secondary circuit of capital by influencing the functioning of the capital market.
force in urban development, at a time when the centrifugal movement of retailing, industry, and population dominated most metropolitan areas (cf. Daniels, 1975: 2). Therefore, many city administrations welcomed offices as the new carriers of the urban economy. Since the rezoning of urban spaces became necessary to accommodate this expansion, frictions over urban land arose. Also, during periods of high supply on the office market, the pressure on the existing built environment generally increases accordingly, and it is interesting to research the way in which the process of regulation both mediates and is influenced by such pressure.

1.3 Toward a plausible set of claims on the regulation of urban office development

Where the spatial structure, density, and architecture of their office markets are concerned, Amsterdam and Frankfurt show fundamental differences. However, the divergence between the plans as drawn on maps and the real spatial tendencies of clustering in CBDs at urban transport nodes and along transport corridors are visible in both cases. Taking into consideration this divergence of urban development trajectories in Amsterdam and Frankfurt, and the increasingly autonomous development dynamics in office development, the goal of this research is to gain an insight into the complex relationships between processes of social and spatial regulation, processes of accumulation through the provision of the built environment (with the emphasis on offices), and their combination into path-shaping regimes of urbanisation, which emerge out of these complex multifaceted struggles and interrelations. We define a regime of urbanisation as an emergent property: a combination of non-linear, independent and often unplanned processes of accumulation, regulation and urbanisation.

Explicitly, the goal of this study is therefore not to describe in detail the ins and outs of office development at a certain moment in time, but rather to understand the ebb and flow in processes of accumulation, regulation, real-estate supply, and urbanisation in the period 1945-2003. The question then remains whether a comparative study of the diverging development trajectories of Amsterdam and Frankfurt can help in the search for the relationship between office development, urbanisation, and regulation.
“No” say those researchers who assume similarities, and who search for general laws of urbanisation. These researchers dismiss differences in appearance as less important, because there is one singular development path that every city goes through. A departure from this path means that the city is lagging behind, or that it is a matter of variation on a known basic structure, for instance through differences in political institutions or culture. Where sociospatial regulation and urban planning are concerned, they should be instrumental, and adaptive to the unavoidable development path. These analyses are based on a “universalist epistemology” (Jones & Hanham, 1995) and rarely problematise the link between, for instance, economic change and urban (spatial and functional) development. Little attention is paid to the processes that mediate structural change and physical development (see Ploeger et al. 2001), an example being the meagre attention paid to the dynamics on the real-estate market, which is said to adapt itself to economic and subsequent urban change. Another example is the limited attention paid to the role of government agencies (of all agencies, for that matter): Their role is related only to the structural processes in urban economic development, and the only thing government agencies can do is adapt as much as possible to this structural process.

Also those researchers who stress difference, and who assume that every city or metropolitan area develops along its own, singular, subjective path, say “No.” These researchers reject the usefulness of comparative research and the existence of theories of urbanisation. For these researchers, the influence of sociospatial regulation is eminent, but very time and place specific, and therefore non-theorisable. Such ideographic approaches refuse to look for causes that go beyond “context;” they “celebrate particularity,” which is not the best way to avoid the “imposition of rigid meta-narratives on the diversity of social life” (Jones & Hanham, 1995: 186).

However, “Yes” is the present author’s answer, following people like Massey (1984), Harvey (1982, 1985), Terhorst & Van de Ven (1997), and Savitch and Kantor (2002, 2003). In line with the current greater theoretical awareness within urban studies, this dissertation starts from the premise that the development of a theory on urbanisation, office development, and sociospatial regulation in different urban contexts is possible without reverting to a quest for natural laws, and without

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1 E.g., van den Berg et al. (1982); van den Berg & Klaassen (1986); van den Berg & van Klink (1992); van den Berg & Braun (1999); Begg (1999); Lever (1999); Cheshire et al. (1986); Cheshire (1990, 1995, 1999); Cheshire & Carbonaro (1996); Cheshire & Gordon (1996, 1998); D'Arcy and Keogh (1998, 1999).
overlooking the notion of path dependency and dissimilarity. In the words of Massey (1984: 300): “the challenge is [...] to understand the general underlying causes [of urban development] while at the same time recognising and appreciating the importance of the specific and the unique.” Central, then, is the notion of contingency, understood as a locally grounded difference that intervenes in a larger process (Jones & Hanham, 1995: 193).

Thus, this dissertation aims to surpass both functionalist and time- and place-specific explanations of urban development. The goal is therefore to present a plausible set of claims on the influence of sociospatial regulation on the spatial and functional outcomes of office provision and wider urbanisation processes, and to use these claims when looking at the diverging realities of Amsterdam and Frankfurt.

The mentioned search for a theory of urban development that can lead us to a “plausible set of claims” that can be used to understand “different or diverging urban trajectories” (Terhorst & Van de Ven, 1997: 23) starts from ideas on the relationship between the economy and the city as developed by Harvey, who was inspired by the work of Lefebvre. In his work, Harvey (1982, 1985) builds on the premise that capital accumulation and urban space are mutually constitutive: Each phase of capitalist development builds on a distinctive form of territorial organisation, and mobile capital is temporally fixed to a certain geographical place by way of long-term investments in cities. This spatial fix is the landscape through which capital accumulation is enabled. In this theory, the form of urban and regional spaces and the demands of capital and society are mutually constitutive: Harvey views location as a fundamental attribute of human activity, but refrains from seeing spatial organisation as a mere reflection of the processes of accumulation. Rather, he recognises that location is socially produced (1982: 374).

In developing a theory on the role of urban planning in social processes through which location is produced, it is important to note that a spatial fix is a temporal monopolisation of a concrete place by a particular functional entity that places a physical object in that place in order to accommodate an urban function (from capital accumulation to extra-economic activity, ranging from social welfare functions and cultural facilities, to sports facilities etc.). Not all urban functions are marketable commodities (private parties will not, for instance, put roads, cheap social housing and utilities in place, because there is no or only meagre profit to be had from doing so), but this does not make them less indispensable for the functioning of an urban system. There are numerous interdependencies between
different urban functions, and a certain amount of fine-tuning between them is necessary in order to overcome negative externalities.

That fine-tuning is what we mean when we talk about the outcomes of sociospatial regulation. A central agent in this fine-tuning process is the urban planner. There are various possible interpretations of the planner’s role, ranging from a minimalist position in which the development of a street plan is the basis and the urban planner tries to correct or prevent the market failures and externalities (a liberal perception of planning), to a more broad interpretation, in which urban reform is central, and the planner intervenes in order to plan the ideal city. The whole range of interpretations between these two polar interpretations, however, is based on legal instruments that give planners the opportunity to intervene in property rights (see also Terhorst & Van de Ven, 1997).

Because of the legal possibilities of the government, the monopolisation of a place by a physical object is dependent on the approval of the government. Planning as the allocation of urban land for specific functions is thus a conflictive activity, over which manifold struggles can exist. Thus, before a spatial fix comes into existence on the ebb and flow of processes of accumulation, social struggles over space occur in the state and the economic realm. These struggles can be infused by a collision of interests between those that profit from the existing physical state and those that see more profit in a future, perceived state, or between various agents that have diverging perceptions of an ideal future use of the space. It has to be noted that in these struggles over space, economic agents – in contrast to political and societal interests – often do not have a collective voice. This makes struggles over spatial plans often implicit, since many economic agents express their perception of present and past decisions on spatial development by voting with their feet, namely by relocating or making extra investments.

A landuse plan can be a formal result of such struggle, and can function as an interlude on the way to concrete urban space. Such a plan, which is backed by legal instruments, has two functions: First, it legally divides urban spaces into realms for specified urban functions, and second, by setting the margins for the future development of an area, it serves as an investment horizon for private agents that want to make profits through the provision of physical objects in concrete urban space.

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* Of course, despite its legal status, real development may diverge from a concrete landuse plan.
1.4 Research question and structure of this book

The divergence between planning ambitions (the outcomes of regulatory processes) and real developments in cities, as well as the divergence of the urban development paths of Amsterdam and Frankfurt, calls for a further investigation of the margins for urban planners to manage space. Keeping in mind the goal of this research, the main questions then are:

How can the co-evolution of the economic, political, and spatial systems be characterized in both Amsterdam and Frankfurt?

What was the influence of these patterns of socio-spatial regulation on the successive generations of office landscapes in Amsterdam and Frankfurt during the period from 1945 to the present time?

These two questions can be broken down into three sub-questions:

1. How did the general processes of economic and societal change work out spatially with regards to offices in Amsterdam and Frankfurt?
2. What were the contingent local processes of regulation on the platform of the economy and state that mediated the larger process of accumulation and urbanisation, and what was their role in bringing about unique periods of spatial fix and flux?
3. To what extent did these unique processes combine into a spatiotemporal regime of urbanisation supporting or diverting these processes of urbanisation, accumulation, and regulation?

In the search for the localised processes of regulation that influence the unfolding of urbanisation and urban office development, this book takes the configuration of offices in a metropolitan area (the material manifestation) as the explanandum (the phenomenon to be explained), and the structural, complex and co-evolving social (economic, political) processes through which agents act as the explanans (that which explains).

First, to understand the dynamics inside the secondary circuit of capital, we ask the question how the key positions in the process of office provision are performed in a time- and space-dependent specific configuration. This question is theoretically addressed in Chapter 2. Following a review of key debates in critical urban theory (urban economic geography, urban real-estate theory, urban planning
theory), Chapter 2 argues for an institutional approach to the office development industry, and argues that such an approach should not be limited to an agency-centred explanation of urban phenomena, but should include structural analysis.

The second task, then, is to think about the way in which the process of accumulation and regulation unfolds from the interactions between these agents and agents that put competing claims on space, inside both the state realm and the economic realm. That is, to develop an abstract theory of social interaction, to develop a plausible set of claims and hypotheses about office development and sociospatial regulation, and to present a research methodology fit to test this theory in practice. Chapter 3 addresses these tasks by arguing for the institutionalism of the regulation approach. This general political economy approach is adapted to the needs of this study by teasing out the questions and hypotheses related to office provision and urbanisation.

The third task is to test the resulting analytical model in concrete circumstances. Chapters 4 to 9 apply the concepts and ideas developed in Chapters 2 and 3 by analysing two cases of urban change and office development. These chapters interpret the histories of office development and urban planning in Amsterdam (Chapters 4-6) and Frankfurt (Chapters 7-9), and distinguish various subsequent regimes of urbanisation.

The fourth task is to reflect on the plausible set of claims, the theoretical model and its hypotheses, and to contrast and compare the histories of post-war office planning and development in Frankfurt. This task is performed in the final chapter of this book (Chapter 10).