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A Reviews of: “Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction”

A. Merrifield, London, Routledge, 2006, ISBN 0 415 95208 5

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offer considerable flexibility in the identification of submarkets and the treatment of dynamics, particularly submarket change.

As noted earlier, Chapters 4, 5 and 6 represent highly detailed applications of the author's proposed methodology. The work presented is too voluminous and complex to summarize in a short review but should be well worth reading by students (in the wider sense) of housing and urban economics. A clear advantage of the methods propounded by the author is the richness and depth of the analysis given the numerical, visual and qualitative dimensions of the detailed methodology which also extends to a series of interviews with expert commentators on each of the housing markets studied.

As the author himself notes, the theoretical advances made by this work are less easy to understand than the obvious value derived from the richness of the empirical work. This probably means that the text will be viewed by academics as an essay in the pursuit of highly detailed identification and analysis of submarkets, rather than a seminal contribution to theory. Nevertheless, it is more than likely that this book, and the methods outlined, will have sustained impact on the future development of empirical approaches to the identification and analysis of housing submarkets.

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Housing Development. Theory, Process and Practice

Andrew Golland & Ron Blake (Eds), *London: Routledge, 2004*, ISBN 0 415 23433 6

The book brings together information on housing production, housing provision and the housing environment, highlighting the theoretical and policy contexts in which housing developments take place as an integrated process. The book relates to what is done, why it is done and how it fits in with the general scope of housing development. The aim of the book is to provide a basic reference for the housing development process, which is multi-disciplinary in scope. The book is not written for a specific potential readership, but addresses professionals, academics and students alike. It is also useful for an international readership interested in the English housing development context and practice.

The editors define housing development as 'the business of supplying houses of the right type, in the right numbers, in the right locations and at the right time'. It thus focuses on issues such as quantity, quality and accessibility. It addresses all the spatial scales relevant to housing development, from local to international. The book is well written and seems to cover all aspects and themes related to housing development. It looks primarily at housing development in England, but some of the chapters also have a more abstract and international scope because of their theoretical embedding. The consequence of the broad scope of the book is, of course, that the topics cannot be elaborated in depth. Each chapter nevertheless presents enough interesting material for

those interested in a general overview of housing development or some of the aspects of it. An additional 'key reading' section at the end of each chapter recommends some books for further reading.

Eight authors are responsible for 14 chapters grouped into five parts: (1) introduction, (2) the political economy of housing development, (3) steps in the housing development process, (4) contemporary practice in housing development and (5) conclusions. All but one of the chapters are written in co-authorship with one of the editors, which guarantees a comprehensively written book. This is often not the case in books covering such a broad topic and written by many different authors and is an asset in this case. The first part of the book includes the introductory chapter on the aims, scope and structure of the book. The second part of the book, on the political economy, is addressed over four chapters. One on the historical, demographic and land-use perspectives, one on housing need, demand and supply, one on the private house-building industry and the housing market, and concluding with a chapter on social housing, affordable development and the role of government. The third part, on steps in the housing development process, also has four chapters, which respectively examine planning and land acquisition, site appraisal and residential estate layout, dwelling construction and design and concludes with the finance, procurement and marketing of housing.

The subtitle of the book is *Theory, process and practice*, but theory and process seem to receive more attention than practice, in the form of examples and case studies. The fourth part of the book, on contemporary practice in housing development, considers a select choice of contemporary themes and does not specifically focus on practice as suggested by the title. The editors justify the selection of the themes by saying that 'they deal with innovations and issues that have more to do with the future than received practice'. The elaborated themes include sustainability, housing renewal, conversion and city living, the European comparative perspective. and innovation and emerging trends in housing development. In this part of the book practice is incorporated by highlighting each chapter with some case studies to give some more insight into each theme in current planning practice.

A fourteenth and concluding chapter (part 5) ends the book. After 13 well documented chapters it is, of course, difficult to conclude a broad covering book on housing development such as this one. The editors do so by discussing a number of current key themes in housing development, 'expanding them in a forward looking way'. This links housing development very much to the current English policy debate. These themes are the de-politicization of housing production, increasing choice and diversity in housing development, housing markets and the declining role of housing development, the growing importance of brownfield site development, consumer and housing development and, finally, the question of whether housing development is moving towards a European approach. What is not touched upon in one of the themes is the debate on the English Planning Reform (planning obligations included), central government's search to strengthen the supralocal and regional level and to strive after

more integration between policy fields. This might have consequences for housing development policy and practice. The very last paragraph of the book touches upon the outstanding challenges for housing development today. It concludes with the quest for a single 'all-in-one' institutional body that can respond to the diverse challenges of modern housing development. After such a comprehensively written book as *Housing Development* a more thorough 'final word' might have been expected. But this is only a minor remark.

The overall impression is that the book is indeed a gain in the available literature on housing development. Its strength is its comprehensiveness and thoroughness across the whole range of aspects and themes related to housing development. Experts in housing development will probably not find a lot of new information in the book, although some of the chapters may be useful because of their concise overview of theory and practice. They will probably use the book for background information. Readers that are not yet familiar with housing development will find it a useful multi-disciplinary introduction to further reading.

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Housing Policy in the United States: An Introduction

Alex Schwartz, *New York: Routledge, 2006*, ISBN 0 415 95030 9 (Hardcover), 0 415 95031 7 (paperback)

Housing is important; all households need shelter. However, the immense scale of the investment in housing and the many intricacies of the market for its provision make housing so much more than just the provision of shelter. Housing markets in the United States work well for many people but fail for many others. Government at all levels intervenes in the workings of the market in many different ways to correct these market failures. Many of these interventions are designed to make housing affordable for the many households who would not otherwise be able to afford good housing. Many of these interventions are designed to make good quality housing accessible to people who otherwise would be forced to choose inferior quality housing. Finally, many of these interventions are designed to make adequate quantities of housing available in markets where otherwise too few units would exist. The many housing policies and programs employed in the United States to ensure the efficient operation of the housing market are a worthy topic of study.

Alex Schwartz's *Housing Policy in the United States: An Introduction* provides a good starting point to understand the many housing programs administered at the federal, state, and local levels in the United States. The book provides a good mixture