

Housing Transformations

**Shaping the space of
twenty-first
century living**

Bridget Franklin



Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Housing Transformations

The turn of the century has seen a proliferation of concepts and models in relation to the development of new types of residential environment in the UK. *Housing Transformations* seeks to account for why this has occurred and how it has been made manifest through the shaping of the actual built form. The first part of the book presents a conceptual framework which argues that the built environment derives from a variety of influences: the structural context, the mediating role of institutions and organisations, the actions and proclivities of individuals, and textual representations. The second part includes illustrated case study examples, covering both new build schemes, such as urban villages, gated communities, foyers, continuing care retirement communities and televillages, and refurbishment projects, such as mental hospitals and tower blocks. The result is an original book in which social theory is combined with elements from the built environment disciplines to provide greater insight into how and why we build places and dwell in spaces that are at once contradictory, confining, liberating and illuminating.

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**In memory of Rose, Christine and Jane
friends who cared**

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Abbreviations

AARC	Active Adult Retirement Community
ABP	Associated British Ports
ASBO	Anti-Social Behaviour Order
BBNP	Brecon Beacons National Park
BCC	Birmingham City Council
BedZED	Beddington Zero Energy Development
BHDC	Birmingham Heartlands Development Corporation
BHL	Birmingham Heartlands Limited
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
BRE	Building Research Establishment
BVT	Bournville Village Trust
CABE	Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
CASPAR	City Centre Apartments for Single People at Affordable Rents
CAT	Centre for Alternative Technology
CBDC	Cardiff Bay Development Corporation
CCRC	Continuing Care Retirement Community
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CIH	Chartered Institute of Housing
CMDC	Central Manchester Development Corporation
CML	Council of Mortgage Lenders
CPAG	Child Poverty Action Group
CPRE	Campaign to Protect Rural England
DETR	Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
DoE	Department of the Environment
DNPA	Dartmoor National Park Authority
DTLR	Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions
EMO	Environmental Movement Organisation
ETHG	East Thames Housing Group
FoE	Friends of the Earth

Abbreviations

GEN	Global Ecovillage Network
GMV	Greenwich Millennium Village
HBF	House Builders Federation
IT	Information Technology
JRF	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
JRHT	Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust
LETS	Local Exchange Trading System
MHLG	Ministry of Housing and Local Government
NHBC	National Housebuilding Council
NHF	National Housing Federation
NHFA	National Federation of Housing Associations
NHS	National Health Service
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance
PPS	Planning Policy Statement
RIBA	Royal Institute of British Architects
RICS	Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
RTPI	Royal Town Planning Institute
SHG	Social Housing Grant
SPAB	Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings
STBI	Sustainable Tower Blocks Initiative
SUDS	Sustainable Urban Drainage System
TCA	Telework Association (formerly Telecottage Association)
TCPA	Town and Country Planning Association
UDA	Urban Development Agency
UDC	Urban Development Corporation
UVF	Urban Villages Forum
UVG	Urban Villages Group
UK	United Kingdom
URBED	Urban and Economic Development Group
US	United States (of America)
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WWF	Worldwide Fund for Nature

Introduction

The production of the built form, in whatever time or place, in whatever shape and for whatever purpose, is irrevocably a human and a social act. Hence, whilst a building might be admired for its aesthetic impact, or appreciated for its engineering properties, it cannot be understood without knowledge of the society in which it has been conceived, of the rules and resources of that society, and of the individuals who are the designers and ultimate users. For the built environment does not randomly appear, but is a result of a multitude of influences and a variety of interconnecting factors: spatial contexts; ideological positions; political interventions; economic conditions; societal attitudes; historical traditions; technical knowledge; professional power; and public perceptions. Thus the shaping and the re-shaping of the built environment derives from the intersection of locationally and temporally situated factors: the structural context, the mediating role of institutions and organisations, and the actions and proclivities of individuals. To this end, it is helpful to draw on and integrate ideas from a range of conceptual and theoretical frameworks in order to gain the necessary depth to explain the variety and nature of the built form, and to inspire a greater insight into how and why we build places and dwell in spaces that are at once contradictory, confining, liberating and illuminating.

In thus connecting the social and the spatial, this book contributes to an emerging academic debate from across a range of disciplines including architecture, sociology, geography and urban design (see, for example, Bentley, 1999; Dovey, 1999; King, 1980; R. King, 1996; Lawrence, 1987; Madanipour, 1997, 2003; Markus, 1993; Markus and Cameron, 2002). But, with the exception of Lawrence (1987), these authors cover urban space and the built environment as a whole, and do not make sustained reference to what is perhaps the most essential element of the built environment: the dwelling. Surprisingly, even the newly emerging discipline of housing studies rarely focuses on the built form of housing, concentrating instead on legislative and policy issues to do with the administration, availability, management and financing of housing. It would

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appear that matters relating to the design and nature of the built form are perceived as more properly the province of the built environment disciplines of architecture, construction, surveying, and even social history.

The fact that housing studies in the UK has been concerned primarily with policy issues has also been cited as the reason why it has been lacking in terms of theoretical and conceptual rigour. Instead it has followed a narrow empiricism which is at the expense of a capacity for reflection, and which tends to reproduce taken for granted assumptions in housing (Jacobs and Manzi, 2000; Kemeny, 1992). This position has derived at least in part from the way in which housing research has developed, reliant almost entirely on funding from central government offices and from housing organisations themselves (see Clapham, 1997). This has cast housing research in the mould of governmental and organisational concerns, dealing with material facts, rules, quantifiable data and normative judgements (P. King, 1996). In this project both the development of theory and the study of the cognitive, creative and humanistic elements of housing have been neglected. This problem has been compounded by the fact that housing studies has struggled to achieve the status of an independent academic discipline, not only because of its largely policy driven concerns, but also because it is a relatively new field of inquiry, with followers drawn from a range of existing disciplines. This has led to the lack of a coherent conceptual or theoretical basis on which housing studies and housing research can build.

To counter this, Kemeny (1992) has suggested that housing should be reconceptualised in terms of the individual disciplines from which housing scholars originate, such as sociology, economics, or political science, and that in this way a more theoretically informed understanding of housing might arise. But it could be argued that as a subject housing is so large in scope and impinges on so many areas of life, that it cannot be conceptualised under the rubric of only one discipline. It may be, as Rapoport and Lawrence have both argued, that what is needed is a more integrated and holistic conceptualisation of housing. Rapoport, from the American school of environment-behaviour research, asserts:

Housing is a particularly striking example of the need for theory. There is too much information, numerous disconnected pieces of empirical research, which, in effect, become counterproductive ... Even a conceptual framework can help by organizing material, although not as much as theory.

(Rapoport, 2001: 145)

Lawrence has argued more strongly for multi-disciplinarity, stating that it is the lack of an integrating conceptual framework that is impeding the formulation of strategies which will inform more appropriate solutions to the design and management of housing (1987). He highlights the need for a multi-faceted or 'contextual' approach, identifying geographical, cultural, social and individual

variables in the use of space, and locating them within a historical perspective (see also Lawrence, 1990, 1994, 1996).

The position adopted in this book, is similar to that proposed by Lawrence. Like Lawrence, who was trained in both architecture and anthropology, I come from a multi-disciplinary background. Trained in social anthropology, sociology and housing studies, I have been employed in both an architecture and a planning school. This has given me a broad base from which to examine housing in all its manifestations and with all its ramifications. Like Kemeny, I believe that one's disciplinary training profoundly affects one's later thinking, even if one moves to new subject matter. However, this thinking may be narrow or broad, depending on the nature of that initial discipline. As a student of social anthropology, I was informed across a range of topics (cultures, social systems, belief systems, myth and ritual, kinship, economic and judicial systems, settlement patterns and house forms) as well as a variety of methodologies and epistemologies (positivism, structuralism, functionalism, participant observation and ethnography). This holistic approach, intrinsic to social anthropology, was assisted by the absorption of a perspective wherein no one version of reality, no one world view, no one way of doing things can be classed as superior to any other – all interpretations and all ways of life are equally valid. The problem here, of course, is that if 'anything goes', it is difficult to create any systematic body of theory as a basis for knowledge, and indeed, since the heady days of structural anthropology in the 1970s, social anthropology has struggled to develop theoretically.

In subsequent study of sociology I was introduced to a more rigorous approach to theory, and have continued to engage with social theory and its application to housing issues. During my academic career I have also been exposed to a number of other disciplines, including environment-behaviour studies, cultural anthropology, urban studies, architecture, urban design and planning, as well of course as housing studies itself – all of which are under-theorised.

What is developed here is not an overarching theory (for, with Rapoport, I do not believe this is possible), but a theoretically informed conceptual framework which is multi-faceted in the way that Lawrence suggests. Whilst such pluralism may disquiet the purist (see also Dovey, 1999), its benefits are intended to create new insights and to extend reflection beyond the boundary of one narrow position. Like Beck (2000) I feel that the issue of theory and perspective is one for pragmatism, and that it is not necessary to adhere rigidly to one particular school of thought, unless of course, one is engaged in a work of theoretical analysis and critique. The book is, essentially, a work of *bricolage*: a term used by the structural anthropologist Lévi-Strauss to describe how ideas and modes of thought are constructed from the assimilation or assemblage of what is to hand (Lévi-Strauss, 1966). And, continuing in anthropological vein, the book does not seek to persuade that what is presented should be interpreted as 'fact': it is but one construction

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of reality that can co-exist with others, in a world of fluid, open and ever-changing meaning.

As well as developing a more holistic conceptual framework, the book deals with some specific manifestations of the built environment in one particular country and at a particular point in time. In the UK, the turn of the century has seen a proliferation of concepts and models in relation to the development of new types of residential environment. These are on different scales, are often targeted at different kinds of people, and include a fairly extensive and diverse list: the urban village; the millennium community; the sustainable urban neighbourhood; the televillage; the ecovillage; the retirement community; the gated community; the home zone; the loft; the live/work unit; the lifetime home; the smart home; assisted living; extra care housing; very sheltered housing; the foyer; supported accommodation; starter homes; affordable homes; key worker housing; the 'space box'; cohousing; ecohomes; earth sheltered housing; the autonomous house; and the low impact development (and this list is not exhaustive). Although some of these have their origins in former models, either in this country or more usually elsewhere, the way they have been appropriated here in recent years is new. Arguably this has arisen as a response to, and as a reflection of, transformations in social processes and modes of living.

In addition there is another trend, and that is the adaptation into dwellings of pre-existing building types, such as hospitals, warehouses, mills, farm buildings, churches, schools and offices. Here, the impact of social and economic change has brought about obsolescence and redundancy, but what has also been necessary is a transformation of perception in which what was originally constructed (mentally and physically) for one particular purpose can now be reconstructed for another.

This proliferation of concepts and models has become of interest to me, in part as an observer of changing patterns of dwelling, but also in the context of the teaching of housing development. This has raised issues as to the reasons for the appearance of these concepts at this particular time, as well as questions such as who has been promoting them and why, who has been adopting them and why, who is developing them and why. There seems to be no literature that addresses these issues – in part because housing studies itself has not, as has already been noted, overly concerned itself with the nature of the built form.

This book will seek not only to describe these concepts and models, but also to account for their emergence at the present time, at the juncture of a particular set of cultural, social, economic and political circumstances. Discussion is confined to the UK, with the focus mainly on England, although some examples from Wales are also used. Cross-cultural comparison might have been a possibility, but the advantage of selecting one (known) country is that it allows greater analytical depth, since cultural and institutional factors are kept constant, and the effect of other influences can be more easily uncovered. The book also does not deal with the individual experience of users, since this is a work investigating the reasons

for the production of particular housing types and not an empirical or theoretical inquiry into use.

The book is divided into two main parts with a third concluding section. Part I provides the conceptual and theoretical framework, starting in Chapter 1 with an overview, the production of a model of the influences on built form, and an example of how the framework can be applied in practice. Chapters 2 to 5 elaborate on the elements of the conceptual framework. Chapter 2 discusses the structural conditions of postmodern society in the context of globalisation and risk, and the concomitant loosening of community and family ties and the crisis of identity. Chapter 3 concerns the institutional arrangements which result in certain types of policies, rules and regulations, whilst Chapter 4 deals with issues of agency as expressed in organisational and individual action. Finally, Chapter 5 addresses theories and issues of built form and design as they relate to residential environments.

Part II turns to the variety of emerging concepts and models of housing in the UK, drawing on the content of Part I to elucidate the contextual factors which have led to their emergence. In the space available it is not possible to assess the full panoply of the new concepts and models that have appeared in recent years, and instead a selection is taken which is representative of different scales, of different national and international influences, of new solutions to old issues, and of responses to new challenges. In addition to general discussion, these chapters include a narrative on specific case study examples to illustrate how the defined outcomes of a generic type are mediated by locational, institutional, organisational and individual factors. Again, these have been chosen for their diversity as well as for their geographical spread, although those about which there is already considerable material in the public domain, such as Greenwich Millennium Village, BedZed, and Poundbury, have deliberately been excluded. Specific projects have been identified through a literature and web based search, and then after checking for potential relevance to the study in hand, access has been negotiated. For each project further information has been obtained from relevant organisations and individuals, and every site has been visited and photographed, although in one or two cases it was not possible to access interior spaces.

The first chapter in Part II, Chapter 6, focuses on the recasting of the 'village' as a concept for residential development. The promotion and realisation of this concept would seem to be based on a nostalgic and mythical construction of 'villageness', which is then projected on to a number of different types of contemporary development. These include the millennium village, the urban village, the retirement village, the leisure village, the televillage and the ecovillage. In this chapter it is the urban village and the televillage which form the focus for discussion, with case studies of Bordesley in Birmingham and the Acorn Televillage in Wales.

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Chapter 7 turns to significant building types of the past and the reasons why a rediscovered interest in heritage has led to a desire to preserve as monuments some of the more architecturally distinctive examples. This reclassification now applies not only to buildings which might be deemed ‘historic’, but also, and somewhat controversially, to those modernist forms built as recently as the 1950s. Because of their qualities, monuments cannot be demolished, and hence alternative uses must be found for those which have become obsolescent or unfit. If this involves retrofitting for contemporary living, then in some cases there is a need to overcome the former negative connotations of the building type. This is the case with the two examples which form the subject matter of this chapter: the Victorian lunatic asylum and the discredited tower block, as illustrated in the case studies of the former Exe Vale mental hospital in Devon, and Keeling Tower in London.

For generations, older people and the feckless young have proved something of a problem to the rest of society, and Chapter 8 considers the reasons for this at the present time. It examines two new solutions for these categories of people, both of which have something of the institution about them: the continuing care retirement community and the foyer. Interestingly, both have been imported from other countries, the US and France respectively, and have been adapted to reflect the British context. Foyers are now found quite widely across the UK, and here the case study of a foyer in Harlow, Essex is used. By contrast, continuing care retirement communities have yet to make any significant impact, and the case study of Hartrigg Oaks in York represents the only one in England.

Chapters 9 and 10 present in many ways contrasting responses to a common, even global, human dilemma: how to live more sustainably in an environment under threat. Institutional solutions, which are dominated by the need to ensure continued economic growth, profit and the security of citizens, have turned towards the promotion of city living, and it is this which forms the subject matter of Chapter 9. To make this policy preference more palatable to a population which largely sees inner cities as places to avoid, there has been an emphasis on improved design, on the contribution of new technology, and on measures to achieve exclusivity. These elements are clear in the two case studies presented, Timber Wharf in Manchester, a modernist inspired block of loft apartments, and Adventurers Quay, a gated community in Cardiff. Chapter 10, by contrast, looks at how certain groups and individuals have taken a radical approach to matters of environmental and social sustainability, in which institutional arrangements are rejected in favour of self help and egalitarianism. The chapter looks in detail at cohousing, a concept of collective living derived from Scandinavia and the Netherlands, and low impact developments, a derivative of the concept of the ecovillage. The two case studies here involve a cohousing scheme in Stroud, Gloucestershire, and a permaculture community on the fringes of Dartmoor National Park.

Finally, Part III draws together the threads that have woven within and between the various chapters, and speculates on future trends. Connections are made between the case studies and the way these help to give meaning to the conceptual

framework introduced in Chapter 1, whilst it is also shown how the conceptual framework itself creates insight and understanding into the patterns that frame the space of practical action. In conclusion, there is some speculation about future directions in the face of the challenges and problems ahead, and about the nature of the social and spatial transformations which might affect the shaping of our residential built forms.

Part I

Theory, concept and practice

1 Towards a contextual approach

In this chapter an overview is provided of some theories and concepts which are deemed to be relevant in developing a contextual approach to the understanding of residential environments. As mentioned in the introduction, this necessitates drawing on a number of disciplinary strands in order to attain sufficient breadth to address the complexities of the nature of housing. The first section of the chapter briefly examines the way in which commentators on built form, anthropologists, and specialists in environment-behaviour studies have analysed the relationship between culture and dwelling, and refers to the limitations of their approaches. The subsequent three sections concern the constitution of society and take a more sociological perspective. First there is a discussion of the structure/agency debate, including a critique of social constructionism and the contributions of Giddens and Bourdieu. Then attention is paid to the different roles of institutions, organisations and individuals in framing agency, and to the importance of discourse in shaping action and meaning. The chapter then moves on to look at how built form too can have meaning, and how spatial organisation is irrevocably implicated in supporting or constraining social action.

The ideas discussed in these sections form the basis of a conceptual framework which shows the interconnectedness of structural, social, institutional, individual and textual factors in creating and interpreting the built form of housing. This is illustrated in the form of a model and then, by way of practical application, in the worked example of the development of a specific housing scheme, that of Quarry Hill in Leeds in the 1930s. The subsequent chapters in Part I build on the elements of the conceptual framework, starting with considerations of structure, then moving on to discussion of institutions, organisations and individuals, and finally ending with ideas about design and the construction of built form.

Culture and dwelling

The housing of every society in the world has a historic distinctiveness; be it located in the deserts of Northern Africa, in the tropical rainforests of South America, on

the steppes of Asia, or in the mediaeval towns of Europe. This distinctiveness is a function of the diversity of cultural context, and it is this which helps to determine how any given society shapes, produces and uses the built forms within which its people dwell. The resultant multiplicity of house styles and modes of dwelling has been given little sustained attention in academic discourse. Architecture, as the discipline which studies the built form, might perhaps have been expected to address this issue, but has shown little consistent interest in the cultural diversity of housing. Exceptions include the cross-cultural work of Oliver (1987, 2003) and the somewhat romanticised accounts of vernacular dwelling from around the world. These have been used to promote the virtues of so-called 'spontaneous' architecture and its perceived ability to achieve more culturally and socially appropriate design than mass produced housing (see, for example, Hamdi, 1991; Rudofsky, 1964; Turner, 1976). In regard to housing specific to British culture, however, the discipline of architecture has been relatively productive, with a number of works which cover vernacular housing, the history of housing types, and particular periods or styles of housing (see, for example, Brunskill, 1981; Colquhoun, 1999; Edwards, 1981; Glendinning and Muthesius, 1994; Gray, 1994; Scoffham, 1984). Together these works illustrate the heritage and tradition of housing in Britain, revealing also the archetypes which are part of the British psyche.

Social and cultural anthropology, as the disciplines which study the cultures of the world, have been remarkably silent in relation to analytical, as opposed to descriptive, accounts of the built environment. The main exception here derives from within the now outmoded field of structural anthropology, popularised in the work of Lévi-Strauss, and based on the structuralist approach popular in the mid-twentieth century. The central idea behind structuralism is that it is possible to identify mental structures and patterns of cognition that can be shown to be common to all cultures. Particularly prevalent is the notion that the human mind classifies through opposition: nature/culture; sacred/profane; purity/danger; insider/outsider; male/female; high born/low born; night/day; left/right (see Douglas, 1970; Lévi-Strauss, 1968). Such oppositions are reflected in thought, myth, ritual and patterns of living, and can also be identified in the ways in which material objects are organised and arranged. Thus, for example, features of the ordering of settlements and dwellings can be shown symbolically to reflect conceptual categories and aspects of social organisation. This results in housing patterns which are in effect 'good to think', since they express a consonance, or homology, between spatial formation and the ordering of social life. Thus the way in which things are arranged in space can assume a metaphorical quality, with particular significance accorded to physical boundaries since they denote the ambiguous and potentially threatening distinction between inside and outside, friend and stranger, culture and nature.

Emerging from the US has been people-environment studies, also known as environment-behaviour studies, which combines aspects of architecture and

cultural (but not structural) anthropology. This cross-cultural approach explores the interaction between people and their environments, in terms of identifying the cultural characteristics which influence the shaping of the built environment, and concomitantly, the ways in which the built environment influences people. The most famous exponent of people-environment studies has been Rapoport, whose prodigious output now spans five decades. In his first major work, *House Form and Culture* (1969), Rapoport examines how people organise and use dwelling space, whilst attempting to devise a conceptual framework to analyse the cultural forces that give rise to them. In later work (1977, 1982, 1985) he advances this conceptual framework to develop his theory of systems of settings and systems of activities – a ‘non-verbal communication approach’, in which housing must be viewed as part of the specific system to which it belongs. This system includes the complete built environment of village and town, monumental buildings, non-domestic spaces, and the links between people and these places. Environments, he states, can be neutral, inhibiting or facilitating for behaviour, with the inhibiting effects becoming acute in times of stress, as, for example, in the case of migrants. Whilst Rapoport has been influential in extending the scope of people-environment studies, he can be criticised both for over-emphasising the determinacy of culture, and for assuming the homogeneity of people within a culture.

The difficulties of providing a conceptual framework sufficient in terms of both rigour and compass may explain why some proponents of people-environment studies have adopted a more focused approach. Thus in a few cases there has been a return to a more structuralist tradition in looking at the significance and symbolic meaning of spaces and places (see, for example, Kent, 1990; Parker-Pearson and Richards, 1994), whilst others have explored place attachment and the meaning and use of home (see, for example, Altman and Werner, 1985; Altman and Low, 1992; Arias, 1993). With their emphasis on identity and the psycho-social, these latter works shift the emphasis from the cultural to the personal, and from society to the individual – in other words to the phenomenological, as encapsulated particularly strongly by Cooper-Marcus (1995). Indeed, whether the emphasis is cultural or phenomenological, people-environment studies can be criticised for the way in which it overlooks the organisations and institutions of society – the political, economic, juridical and administrative framework within which social relations are framed, and the regulations, norms and rules whereby resources are produced and distributed. For an insight into the relationship between these issues and the actions in time and space of individuals, we need to turn to sociology and social theory.

The riddle of society

The question of the relationship between society and the individual strikes at the heart of a fundamental problem in social theory: that of the primacy of the individual

or of society; the chicken and egg issue that continues to divide sociologists between those who believe that society is driven by overarching structures external to and independent of individual actions, and those who believe society is constituted by individual action and the meaning given by individuals to those actions. The 'macro' perspective, or macrosociology, is concerned primarily with the large scale institutions and organisation of society, as exemplified historically by the structuralist and functionalist schools of thought represented by Durkheim (1964), Merton (1967) and Parsons (1937). More recently social realism has developed a more sophisticated perspective on this tradition, arguing that social life consists of layers of reality, and that these layers exist objectively at a deeper level from everyday action and experiences (see, for example, Layder, 1997; Sayer, 2000; Scott, 1995). The 'micro' perspective, or microsociology, avers that such reification of social facts is misguided, and that social life consists only of the minutiae of day to day activities, social interaction and personal experiences, as exemplified by the approaches of phenomenology, ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism (see, for example, Blumer, 1969; Garfinkel, 1967; Schutz, 1972). These two contrasting perspectives can be criticised for failing on the one hand to take individual actors seriously, reducing them to inert bearers and reproducers of systems, and on the other, for failing to take account of the wider social processes which form the context within which action takes place, thus reducing society to the constructs of knowledgeable actors. This dichotomy, or *dualism*, between what can be further defined as 'structure' (objectivist) and 'agency' (subjectivist) approaches, has been somewhat caricatured by Archer (2000) as 'Society's Being' and 'Modernity's Man': the passive dupe and cipher on the one hand, and the active, creative (and rational) thinker on the other.

The central problem of dualism is that each approach represents what many would consider to be a partial and one-sided view of the constitution of society – in one approach individual agency is elided out of existence, and in the other, there is no such thing as society. In recognition of this apparent lacuna, there have been some attempts to make linkages. An early example was the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966), who put forward the theory of social constructionism. For Berger and Luckmann, society has both an objective and a subjective reality, based on interpersonal action and reproduced through knowledge and language. Their contention is that social reality exists in terms of the actions and thoughts, meanings and interpretations of individuals, who thus create the totality of everyday knowledge in a taken for granted environment. This knowledge base equates to the institutions and social rules of society, which are in turn transmitted to the next generation through socialisation. Different forms of knowledge are acquired by different social groups, and are often expressed symbolically through styles of dress, rituals or manners of speaking.

The significance of the contribution of Berger and Luckmann is that it seeks to moderate the extremes of dualism by proposing both that individuals create society,

and that society creates individuals. But there remain weaknesses for which social constructionism is criticised, notably that the emphasis is clearly on society as a product of human interaction, with a concomitant neglect of both social and material reality (Gergen, 1994). Furthermore, there is no discussion of conflict and change, of space and place, of the distribution of goods and resources, of power and authority. Despite this, social constructionism has proved influential, and in particular has been central to the development of a more theoretically informed approach in housing studies (see, for example, Clapham, 1997; Franklin, 1998; Franklin and Clapham, 1997; Jacobs and Manzi, 2000; Jacobs *et al.*, 2004).

In the endeavour to develop a more sophisticated and integrated resolution of the structure/agency debate the role of structuration theory has proved influential. The two key thinkers associated with this approach to theorising society are Giddens and Bourdieu, the prolific and scholarly works of whom have been a major force in the social scientific world in both the UK and Europe. One of Giddens' main contributions has been in overcoming the *dualism* of the individual and society and reconceptualising it as the *duality* of agency and structure: 'By the *duality of structure* I mean that social structure is both constituted *by* human agency and yet is at the same time the very *medium* of this constitution' (Giddens, 1993: 128–9, original emphases). Giddens makes a distinction between structure, as the rules and resources of social systems, and the system (or society) itself, which consists of reproduced relations between actors situated in time and space. Structures are both the medium and the outcome of human action. Essentially, social structures do not have independent existence, but are reproduced or transformed by actors who experience the rules and resources as either constraining or enabling. Giddens conceptualises rules as having normative, symbolic and legitimising aspects, whilst resources are either authoritative or allocative (concerned with the control of material products). These rules and resources comprise the structural properties of social systems, which often become embodied in institutions. Among these structural properties, a number of structural principles are also significant and account for changes from feudal and traditional institutions to modern, capitalist institutions.

Structure has an abstract and recursive quality, and is not fixed in either time or space. Human action, on the other hand, is necessarily situated in time and space, and thus action helps to fix structures and social systems, both in the here and now, and through constant reproduction as actions are repeated or re-created anew. For this reason, the settings of action are important to Giddens, providing the contextuality of social life in both time and space. In referring to physical settings, Giddens prefers the term 'locale' (1984: 118) to place, pointing out that a locale can be at any scale, from a room, through a street corner, to a city or the territory of a nation state. Locales are 'regionalised', sub-divided into zones which are of significance for different time-space activities – thus a house can be zoned into spaces used for different activities at different times of day. Regions are generally demarcated by physical or symbolic markers, which help to signal movement

between regions and to indicate the need to adopt appropriate types of interaction and behaviour (reminiscent of the 'front' and 'back' regions of Goffman (1971)). Cities, too, are regionalised into areas which can be conceived of as front and back regions, and such zoning is strongly influenced by the operation of housing markets and the consequent social constitution of neighbourhoods.

Giddens' contribution to the theorising of society has been influential, but as with any other theory is not above criticism. In particular, it has operated at the level of 'grand theory' rather than as something which is demonstrably capable of being employed at the empirical level to explain practical action. There is a tendency to see agents as both homogenous and amorphous, without class, gender, age or ethnic group, and with no account of power, authority, or practices of domination. In his early work personality, affect, emotion, and any sense of interdependence or negotiation between actors are ignored, whilst little justice is done to the realities of time and space (see Bryant and Jary, 1991). More recently, however, Giddens has demonstrated a concern for the social predicaments and existential questionings of humanity, particularly in regard to how identity has fared under so-called late modernity, as will be discussed further below and in Chapter 2.

Bourdieu's approach to the structure/agency dichotomy overcomes some of the problems associated with Giddens. Bourdieu's intellectual orientation is towards both philosophy and sociology, but he has been strongly influenced by ethnography and social anthropology and by his fieldwork in Kabylia in Algeria. It was this experience which led him to question both the structuralist ideas of the anthropologist Lévi-Strauss, and the way in which the anthropologist interprets practical action. He believes there is more to action than the account given by the 'native', and hence, like Giddens, takes issue with interpretative and ethnomethodological approaches (Bourdieu, 1977). On the other hand, and again like Giddens, he does not believe that actors are simply passive bearers and reproducers of objective structures. But Bourdieu is less interested in devising a conceptual theory than in attempting to develop a way to analyse practical action at the empirical level, and it is here that his main contribution lies.

Bourdieu's central concept is that of the *habitus* as a mediating factor between structure and social practice. The *habitus* is defined as: 'a system of durable transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures ...' (Bourdieu, 1977: 72). More simply the *habitus*: 'implies a "sense of one's place" but also a "sense of the place of others"' (Bourdieu, 1989: 19). It operates as a strategy generating principle, a disposition to act in a certain way, or a 'feel for the game', which allows individuals to know how they should act in a given circumstance, and in a way that accords with social norms and institutional precepts (thus reproducing them). But the *habitus* is neither rigid nor a predeterminant of destiny, since it permits individual (conscious or unconscious) choice and personal interpretation, albeit within a certain range: '*Habitus* is creative, inventive, but within the limits of its structures, which are

the embodied sedimentation of the social structures which produced it' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 19). Individuals are socialised from birth into the *habitus* analogous to their position in society, and thus *habitus* is operationalised at both individual and group (or class) level. Classes and groups are characterised by their status as the dominated and the dominating, and each tends to choose goods and services which are homologous with their social group. The dominating classes seek 'distinction' through the determination, by symbolic means, of what constitutes good 'taste' – setting the fashion in house type or clothing, defining which is the 'right' newspaper to read, or determining the 'best' home furnishing style (Bourdieu, 1984). The dominated then seek to emulate the dominating, thus encouraging the latter to move on to new forms of distinction.

The context of action is referred to by Bourdieu as a 'field', with the *habitus* providing a practical sense of how to act within the field. Fields are characterised by the possession of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital which bestow power and legitimacy – thus the fields of education or the arts possess cultural capital (knowledge, aesthetic taste), the field of banking possesses economic capital, the field of the family possesses social capital, the field of the peerage possesses symbolic capital. But fields can also be the sites of struggle and conflict, with individuals vying with each other for power, through possession or display of forms of capital – the political field is the prime example here (Bourdieu, 1992). His framework helps to account also for examples of 'disharmony', when, for example, a solution imposed on one social group by another, such as the spatial organisation of a housing estate, does not accord with the *habitus* of the dominated group. For space and spatial organisation have social significance in that they govern practices and representations. Thus the estate, the house, even the body, are all forms of physical space and sites which embody or objectify the generative structures of the *habitus*. This is exemplified by Bourdieu through the example of the Kabyle house in which the categories which underpin the social world are shown to be replicated in the layout and assignment of space within the house – thus the child learns by association how the social world is structured and how to act within it (Bourdieu, 1973).

Bourdieu's work has always held a lesser appeal in the English speaking world than that of Giddens', perhaps in part because of its rather obscure style and the opacity of its concepts (see Jenkins, 1992). His insights do, however, have much to recommend them, especially as his approach is more flexible and more grounded in action than Giddens'. However, like Giddens, he remains closer to the objective than the subjective end of the epistemological tradition of sociology. The individual and the group are still largely faceless and undifferentiated, with a somewhat reductive distinction between the dominating and the dominated. There is also a neglect of personality, biography, decision making or negotiation, whilst the capacity and role of institutions and organisations is largely overlooked.

Both Giddens and Bourdieu make mention of place and space, suggesting that structuration can have something to say on these issues, but in essence, there is a

Theory, concept and practice

failure to elaborate on the variety and reality of place and space, and how place and space in all their manifestations, including built form, both constitute and are constituted by social action. In an attempt to remedy this situation a few authors have subsequently explored the application of structuration in relation to place, environment and housing (see, for example, Donley-Reid, 1990; Dovey, 1999, 2002; Lawrence, 1993; Pred, 1983; and Sarre, 1986). Between them these authors address space in its widest meaning, from ecosystem to geographical area, from localised housing system to actual form. They also demonstrate, with varying degrees of conviction, elaboration and understanding, that structuration theory can provide only a partial elucidation of the connection between the social and the spatial – in terms of how social practices are enacted in space, constrained by space, transformative of space, or deposited in space.

Institutions, organisations and sentient beings

Institutions provide the ongoing framework whereby social, economic, political and juridical systems can be translated into processes activated by human agency. Institutions thus mediate between structure and agency, and are powerfully implicated in the extent to which the structural systems of society are reproduced or alternatively transformed. Institutions therefore have a life beyond the individual or group, have a history and a future, and have powers embedded within them which go beyond the immediacy of human action at any one time and which influence the possible scope for action. Institutions include, for example, the family, the Church, the law, the system of governance, the class system and the monarchy, each of which is characterised by its own rituals, principles and ways of thought and action. Effectively these institutions embody the rules and resources of the social system; they provide continuity and certainty, whilst also helping to shape the boundaries of activity in terms of the normative and the acceptable.

Institutions cannot themselves act: it is individuals who necessarily perform this function. Acting alone or in groups, in loose networks or in tight organisations, it is they who mediate both structure and institutions, with the potential both to perpetuate and to transform the existing order. In Bourdieu's terms, in relation to the *habitus* being a knowledge of how to act in a certain situation, or a feel for the game, then institutions embody the game. Those who play the game are not only those in positions of power who influence policy and decision making, but all those others whose thoughts, speech and action can affect events in ways which are not necessarily predictable, and which may be reinforcing or subversive of the status quo. It is this which prevents institutions from being immutable, making them vulnerable to those maverick individuals who step across accepted boundaries and bring into question the integrity and solidity of the whole institution – as witness the contemporary issues of paedophile and gay priests in the Church, and the transgressions of the Queen's children in marriage.