

A View From The Ground

Implications for the literature on the 'models of the development process' based on a model of praxis and an associated mapping study.

Jonathan Drane*

Keywords: Property development process, property developer, property development models

Abstract.

This article identifies limitations in ontology and epistemology in the literature related to 'models of the development process', through a mapping exercise, which places existing views gained through visors of economy, political economy, institutional and social theory in perspective with a relative view of praxis.

Proponents of this field of study who have reviewed it over the twenty years since its contemporary categorical analysis (Healey 1991, 1992), (Gore & Nicholson 1991) suggest, in many cases, that they could gain collectively from an increased view of praxis in the property development mechanism, and associated empirical engagement with property developer actors.

A model of praxis in the commercial 'property development mechanism', is introduced which is founded on a taxonomy of 'lots and land parcels', 'value tension', 'arbitrage transaction', 'title distribution' and a 'plurality of developer types' who 'transition the parcel' within a series of alignments, both constrained and empowered by prior 'collective manifestations' by 'creating parties'.

The bookends of the literature used in this paper, are set at 1991 and 2012 over two decades, starting with Patsy Healey's articles on the development process (Healey 1991, 1992) and ending with David Adam's very recent article on 'notional property developers' (Adams 2012). The literature is first mapped, dissected and surveyed for limitations due to existing theoretical frames. The central tenets of the author's model are then used as a lens for clarifying inadequacies based on praxis.

The study discovers attraction to the topic by the most erudite of scholars, with often brilliant and revealing high level accounts, which are through sometimes conflicting visors. Amongst this chorus however, the voices are still trying to come to terms with what is really happening on the ground. The article provides increased definition of the property development process from a view of praxis, and an associated way forward for filling gaps in the knowledge base on this important topic.

*Jonathan is a Doctoral Candidate, University of New South Wales, Faculty of the Built Environment, Sydney, Australia j.drane@student.unsw.edu.au, www.jondrane.net