

Abstract

Despite extensive studies by urban theorists into the growth and development of cities, little within these accounts explains the role and influence of property development as a catalyst for such growth. The most recent accounts of property development in this context were made in the early 1990s by Healey, Gore and Nicholson, and such accounts not only focussed on a process-based view but were made predominantly through the eyes of economists, political economists, planners and social theorists with few property developer protagonists.

Looking through the eyes of the property developer, and assisted by the author's related history as a builder and developer, a new model emerges which is based on: a theoretical analysis; three case studies of cityscapes in Australia- in Townsville, the Palmer and Railway Precincts (Queensland) and in Newcastle, the Honeysuckle Precinct (New South Wales); further case examples and auto-ethnographic reflection.

A model is built which articulates the nature of constituent land parcels within cityscapes, the conditions for their transition and resultant creation of new developments, which impact on the growth of cityscapes. The mercurial and transient nature of the property developer and the mechanistic nature of property development are revealed, which goes beyond traditional process-based views. Developer protagonists which are often seen to be the root cause of unwanted growth are revealed to be subject to a greater mechanistic force that relies on alignments and windows of operation.

A new and missing lens is provided to the existent body of research into the growth of cities through the eyes of the property developer which informs researchers, planners and policy- makers. The often high level, morphological view of planners and policy makers is balanced by a model which is built from the ground up, revealing the mechanism of property development and its key forces and protagonists.