

Justification for Employing the Structure and Agency Approach

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February 2019

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The research landscape framework indicates the multiplicity and complexity of this scope. Therefore, exploring the need for research requires using approaches which provide the instruments to analyse this complexity effectively. The proposed approach should provide a perspective to consider all involved actors and factors. Achieving a theoretical framework for analysing such a complex phenomenon is controversial.

However, a wide consensus now exists in support of some form of institutional analysis to explore a complicated phenomenon such as built environment development. (Guy & Henneberry, 2000, Ball, 1998). Dear and Moos (1986) endeavoured to provide insight into the understanding of the urban built environment by performing an empirical application of Giddens' (1984) structuration theory. They stated that the concept of structure and agency provides a very distinctive perspective in the study of social phenomena. Healey (1992) devised a model by applying the concepts of structure and agency to explain the complexity of the development process. This approach applied to analyse the housing development process provided a comprehensive way of understanding the complex set of relationships which constitute the framework in which development can take place (Shojaei, 2016).

The structure and agency approach enable an exploration of each domain considering the structure, the agency, and their relationship. This approach enables analysis of what may take place in the future digital built Britain, detecting all stakeholders, private and public organizations, while highlighting the continuous interaction between structural parameters and the application of each of i) rules, ii) resources, and iii) strategies, and exploring the capabilities needed by actors who play roles in this area. The exploration of rules, resources, capabilities, expectations, and exceptions sets a valuable framework for what drives and generates activity and value while demonstrating that private and public institutions' behaviour is dynamic and capable of challenging and modifying whatever constitutes the structural framework.

Applying structure and agency as a sensitizing device sheds light on how and at what stage of the digitalization process each of these rules, interests, expectations, and conceptions are a constraint or a capability. Furthermore, structure and agency enable a fuller conception of the mutual interaction between the stakeholders, the digitalization process, and built assets and services, by distinguishing the interests and actions of actors and institutions within the broader context of structural forces.

Applying this perspective enables us to:

- Consider built assets, services and human beings simultaneously
- Detect the actors involved in each step of the digitalization process, whether they are producing, delivering, or consuming
- Explore the implications of integration of services, infrastructure, and the built environment
- Note informal and formal rules, regulations, customs, learning, and practice
- Investigate the interests, perceptions, expectations, and strategies of individual actors and public and private institutions, and assess how these affect the adoption of digitalization and the opportunities and drawbacks for public and private actors
- Assess the significant role of power embedded in all social interactions which may undergo change as a result of digitalization
- Explore the context and structural forces, such as economic, political, financial, environmental, cultural and technological systems and the interplay between them
- Consider unacknowledged circumstances, hidden elements, and unintended outcomes
- Take time and place into account in the process of digitalization

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