Housing Discourse: Historical development, epistemological gap and sociological modeling

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Abstract

Housing issue is essentially major social issue. Even though housing is vital for individual life and social life, the attention given to its theorization and epistemological framework is neglected. Different disciplines and scholars from different disciplinary background have been carrying out housing study. The misplacement of housing study and social relegation of housing per se triggered this theoretical review of housing discourses. Housing study needs to have self-governing epistemological ground and housing research should be framed with its grand theories. Housing is a key social need that strongholds the foundational essence of social fabric. So far housing studies did not understand housing discourses as a central sociological agenda. Isolation of housing issue from major sociological concerns misplaced housing study thereby affected epistemological and methodological advancement of housing knowledge. Therefore, housing study call for grand theory that potentially governs all aspects of housing issues. Housing is a social phenomenon which can be expressed in terms of processes, behaviors, development and structures. Housing problems are attributed to different social dynamics and structural challenges which enforce households to behave in different ways to cope with the problems. These issues are basically sociological concerns which enable us to scaffold housing study with sociological theories.

HOUSING DISCOURSE: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT, EPISTEMOLOGICAL GAP AND SOCIOLOGICAL MODELLING

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Abstract

Housing issue is essentially major social issue. Even though housing is vital for individual life and social life, the attention given to its theorization and epistemological framework is neglected. Different disciplines and scholars from different disciplinary background have been carrying out housing study. The misplacement of housing study and social relegation of housing per se triggered this theoretical review of housing discourses. Housing study needs to have self-governing epistemological ground and housing research should be framed with its grand theories. Housing is a key social need that strongholds the foundational essence of social fabric. So far housing studies did not understand housing discourses as a central sociological agenda. Isolation of housing issue from major sociological concerns misplaced housing study thereby affected epistemological and methodological advancement of housing knowledge. Therefore, housing study call for grand theory that potentially governs all aspects of housing issues. Housing is a social phenomenon which can be expressed in terms of processes, behaviors, development and structures. Housing problems are attributed to different social dynamics and structural challenges which enforce households to behave in different ways to cope with the problems. These issues are basically sociological concerns which enable us to scaffold housing study with sociological theories.

Keywords: Housing Study, Housing Theory, Sociological modeling

Sociologyasascienceofsocietyfromverybeginningmadeurbanizationrelatedcrisisitsprimaryagenda.Housingtopicandresearchwaslate...urse,itcapturesthemaindimensionsofthestudyofresidenceandconstitutesatleastastartingpointfordevelopingsociologyofresidence.

Figure 1. Dimensions of housing and socio-spatial components of residence (Kemeny, 1992)

Kostelecký (2000) claimed that housing study has been attracting the attention of social scientists for many years. Kostelecký believes that any attempt to incorporate the problems of housing into the research of the development of the social structure is worthwhile. Kostelecký (2000) employed the Marxism and Weberian positions of social inequalities in studying housing.

Gilbert et al (2002) engaged in housing study employing comparative approach noticing that comparative work complicates the task of research but has the advantage of discouraging overgeneralization. They claimed intellectual rigorous of comparative approach in studying housing but they did not portray the epistemological gap of housing issue.

Despite the advancement of theories of urban poverty yet important questions remain unanswered so that future research should explore the differential effects of relocation to different types of housing and neighborhoods (i.e. public housing, vouchers, new mixed income communities) on outcomes such as residents’ social networks and assess the effects of housing mobility programs (Curley, 2005). So far housing knowledge is not given adequate emphasis.

Desmond et al (2015) assessed that sociology of housing appeared in 1980 when more researches were done by government staff and consulting firms. They noticed that housing dynamics necessitated the third party policing that guide landlords and tenants relationships. Furthermore, they indicated that latest research emphasized fallout of forced displacement from housing in which they inspected in what way eviction and foreclosure affect families ‘material hardship, health and neighborhood quality. Despite its belatedness, sociological discourse of housing has been showing evolutionary steps forward. This establishes epistemological set up for housing study.

Steil et al (2015) revealed that from works of W.E.B. DuBois (1903) to St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton (1945) on naturalness of segregation and Park’s and Burgess’ analyses of urban neighborhoods and processes of segregation whereby they challenged contemporaneous sociological and legal arguments. Steil et al (2015) acknowledged that DuBois (1903) set a penetrating agenda for sociological research in the United States at the time to understand the broad processes of social stratification through the experiences of African Americans. They exposed that due to unhealthy relation, poor housing, deprivation of social, economic and
political opportunity as well as overall inequalities race riot was out broken in urban area. Indeed, housing question remains puzzle. Sociologically, the dark side of housing in urban centers was unseen which presses societal pain and academic burden.

Martin (2017) proclaimed:

New sociology of housing holds out the promise that it may help to solve some intellectual problems that have plagued the urban sociology of neighborhoods. For the last two decades, sociologists have pursued the measurement of neighborhood effects on individual life chances, and one of the findings of this research program is that the effects of neighborhood context on individuals are often weaker, more short lived, or more highly variable than we first expected. One reason may be that our relationships to the places we live are mediated by, and dependent on, housing relations that are themselves variable, and that often exert a substantial effect on our circumstances. We may be more deeply embedded in housing relations than we are in particular neighborhoods. Mortgage lender or the landlord matters more than the neighbor in the lives of many Americans.

Martin (2017) appeals to sociological inquiry of housing. Ruonavaara (2018) discussed three different positions concerning theory in housing research: theory of housing, from housing and about housing. The positions are about the possibility and desirability of different ways of theorizing in research on housing-related topics (Ruonavaara, 2018:179). Ruonavaara claimed that constructing general or grand theory of housing, which encompasses all housing-related research topics, is possible and desirable. Napier et al. (2018) argued that housing education and training should reflect advances in research theory and practice. Napier et al.(2018) concerned that several disciplines made effort with housing issue without single mother discipline and without no one theoretical pervasive. It calls for a sociological inquiry of housing issue. Even if its epistemological emergence and development is too late, sociology of housing is a vital field.

**Motive Statement: Substantiating Housing Theoretical Lacuna**

Housing theorization and housing research trend is too embryonic. Even though there are tremendous burning issues related to housing problems, its discourse has remained to be invisible. The central argument of this proposal is relegated position of housing in sociological inquiry and bridging the gap between sociology and housing research. It aims to scaffold theory, methodology and empirical issues of housing in urbanization context.

Thus, this review article seeks to appraise sociological dimension of housing in terms of dynamics, social exchange, housing structures and challenges, housing coping behavior, housing interaction, housing status, housing tenure, housing relations, housing morality, informal/squatting housing and its controversies.

In fact, housing world exploration needs creative thinking ability to bond the apparently unrelated issues and blending existing housing knowledge into innovative approach about building blocks of housing phenomenon. Solving housing epistemological, theoretical and empirical thesis require an adventure in which housing researcher perceives and resolves theoretical and empirical knowledge gap between a present housing research relegation and desired housing knowledge substantiation towards epistemological goal of crafting sociological inquiry of housing issue.

Substantively, urban residents are currently unable to access affordable and adequate housing mainly due to all aspects of housing issue is not given adequate attention. Despite the magnitude of urban housing problem, the attention given to this issue is very neglectful. Thus, this study is motivated to reveal the puzzles of sociological forces, structural challenges, housing interaction, housing exchanges, housing coping behavior and housing controversies with particular emphasis to urbanization context.

Mills (1959) declared that sociological imagination is essential to solve social problems by questioning the aspects of social structure that is taken for granted and using fantasy and lateral thinking so as to craft sociology. Studying socially embedded event entails novel thinking and engagement of emotional attachment and detachment interfold in complex ways. Mills (1959:121) asserted theory and method as follows:
To have mastered ‘method’ and ‘theory’ is to have become a self-conscious thinker, a man at work and aware of the assumptions and the implications of whatever he is about. To be mastered by ‘method’ or ‘theory’ is simply to be kept from working, from trying, that is, to find out about something that is going on in the world. Without insight into the way the craft is carried on, the results of study are infirm; without a determination that study shall come to significant results, all method is meaningless pretense.

Housing study has not at all developed its discourses and painstaking analysis which portrays housing issue is marginalized agenda in social sciences debate (Kemeny, 1992; XVIII). In addition, hitherto existing housing study has theoretical gap. Hence, housing study requires sociological efforts towards housing sociology and intellectual basis within sociology oriented to the problems, theories, and debates within the discipline. So far housing studies ignored sociological perspectives and pretend to pick a little from here and a little there from different disciplines without a single discipline based concepts, theories and methods (Kemeny, 1992).

Concerning sociological study of housing, Kemeny (1992) noticed that:

The widespread influence of Parsonian structural functionalism during the 1950s was not reflected in housing research. Nor was the reaction to this that took place in the 1960s, with the emergence of symbolic interactionism and the re-emergence of Marxism. Nor were the methodological debates of these years, notably over qualitative versus quantitative research, which was rife in sociology, at all evident in housing studies.

Despite growing interest in theoretical issues, there remains a strong tendency for housing researchers to bury themselves in their own empirical and policy issues with almost complete disinterest in such ‘abstract’ questions (Kemeny, 1999). This confirms that housing study is unobserved virgin subject in sociological discourse so that it requires sociological study.

The Substantive Focuses: Review Objective

The general objective of this review is to assess historical development, epistemological gap and sociological modeling of housing study.

Substance of the Review: Educational, Research and Policy Significance

This review is expected to help the following theoretical gap and empirical relevance. First, this review can add knowledge to the existing housing knowledge relates to current housing dynamics, housing structural challenges, housing choice logics and housing coping mechanisms as well as housing controversies within urban housing in terms of morality vs. utility.

Second, the housing abstraction and substantiation will empower institutionalization of sociology of housing as integral issues of sociological agenda. Furthermore, the rapid institutionalization of housing studies in higher education and research is likely to reinforce the tendency to view housing as an abstract subject.

Third, housing discourse trend can promote housing research debate in discipline of sociology in terms of qualitative and quantitative approach.

Fourth, review can be used as essential references in coming research projects. As it is breakthrough both in theoretical and methodological dimension the paper will have better privilege to be used as baseline for coming sociological study of housing.

Fifth, housing knowledge can help housing problem minimization and improve housing management. Findings of this review are expected to have paramount significance in addressing practical urban housing problems and to create better housing scenario.

Sixth, housing study help policy makers and urban planners to have knowledge based policy guidelines. So, the results of this research are expected to be essential input in urban housing policy and urban development.
Seventh, research findings will help to have regulatory strategies, frameworks and systems to generate proper revenue from housing sector and urban housing interactional pitfalls.

Last but not least, it may be used as a symbolic representation of sociological magnificent in addressing pressing social need. This in turn can be considered as incentive for sociological advancement and increase sociological knowledge influence in scholarly world.

**Conceptual framework: Abstraction of key terminologies**

Figure 2: Research Scheme (Conceptual framework) of the study (Researcher’s own construction, 2020)

Napieretal. (2018) emphasized on enhancing the link between research theory and method in housing study. They concerned that discipline.

**Research Method: Mixing Method Research Design**

Mixing method is intended to look at different problems within the same research study employing different approaches. Thus, in this review, there is no rigid boundary between these methods. Depth interviews, case studies, and focus group discussions are used for the primary data collection. Secondary data will be collected from various archives such as journal articles, government organization relevant documents/reports.

Eventhough housing is one of the basic needs that determine the security of the residents, urban housing is becoming a critical problem. The fixed approach is that abstracting housing out of social structure and focusing upon the least to a failure to integrate it into the wider social being (Coker et al., 2008). These studies stress that housing is more than a shelter. In addition, Coker added that housing is widely acknowledged, but the income population has been in focus, because there is the most vulnerable and less provided for informal urban development. Roe argued that the effect model their ontological position on housing is realist ontology. Houses don’t only provide shelter, but also serve as a measure of social effect of realism. ontology. In the same manner, Buckley (2014) did research in Rwanda thereby identified Kigali’s topographical conditions. On the other hand, Gete (2015) creates the model for three sets of exogenous shocks. These exogenous drivers of housing demand and drivers such as urban migration, absence of good governance and several social factors are basically common. Yet housing research with income households, are cost burdened, spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing, with the burden being greater among renters (Blumenthal et al., 2009). Consequently, housing is a multifaceted topic. Housing is both material and social activities in most literatures. This implies that housing is not only a material thing but also social.

**Problematization and Justification of Housing Thesis: Epistemological Assumptions**

Despite the magnitude of urban housing problem, the attention given to this issue is very neglectful. Rapid urbanization stimulates dynamics. One reason why housing researchers have been so heavily policy-oriented is that there has been to a problematic acceptance of making social welfare do not constitute a housing problem. These sorts of studies question underlying taken-for-granted assumptions within housing research are well established in other areas of the social sciences. Theory of housing implies possibilities related to addressing these problems. In nutshell, housing studies in general and housing problem in particular require sociological approach in order to have better results.

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