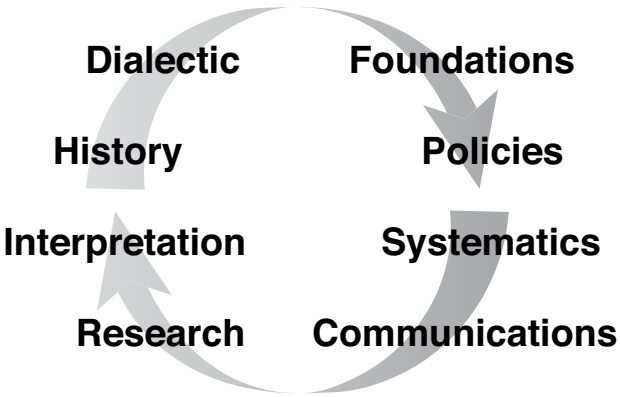
Making Progress in Housing

A Framework for Collaborative Research

Sean McNelis



Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

Making Progress in Housing: A framework for collaborative research

This book presents a new approach to housing research, one that is relevant to all the social sciences.

Housing research is diverse and operates across many disciplines, approaches and methods making collaboration difficult. This book outlines a methodological framework that enables researchers from many different fields to collaborate in solving complex and seemingly intractable housing problems. It shows how we can make progress in housing research and deliver better housing outcomes through an integrated approach.

Drawing on the work of renowned Canadian methodologist, philosopher, theologian and economist, Bernard Lonergan (1904–1984), McNelis outlines a framework for collaborative research: Functional Collaboration. This new form of collaboration divides up the work of housing research into functional specialties. These distinguish eight inter-related questions that arise in the process of moving from the current housing situation through to providing practical advice to decision-makers. To answer each question a different method is required. *Making Progress in Housing* is the result of finding new answers to this complete set of eight inter-related questions.

This approach to collaboration opens up a new discourse on method in housing and social research as well as new debates on progress and the nature of science.

Sean McNelis has over 30 years' experience in housing management, housing policy and housing research. He is a research fellow at The Swinburne Institute for Social Research, Swinburne University of Technology, Australia.

Contents

Abbreviations xiii
Acknowledgements xv
Preface xvii

Introduction **1**

PART I
Context 5

1 Problems, questions and issues 7

Social housing: an overview 7
Housing research and making progress in housing 10

2 Functional Collaboration: background 15

Bernard Lonergan and the remote origins of Functional Collaboration 16
Searchings for Functional Collaboration 24

3 Towards a scientific approach to research 37

A current standard model of housing research: external and internal processes 38
Research as asking and answering questions 42
A proposal for a scientific approach to housing research 46

PART II
The functional specialties 49

4 Research and the empirical question 56

Research: an initial view 57
Primary housing research 58
What are these primary researchers doing? 64
Towards a more precise understanding of Research 67
Implications for housing research 69

5 Interpretation and the theoretical question 72

Interpretation: an initial view 74
Defining what is being researched 74
What are these researchers doing? 82
Towards a more precise understanding of Interpretation 85
Illustration: Towards an indicative theory of social housing rent 102
Implications for housing research 107

6 History and the historical question 113

The vector of change: an initial view of History 114
History within housing research 115
What are these historians doing? 118
Towards a more precise understanding of History 119
Two indicative illustrations of History 125
Implications for housing research 130

7 Dialectic and the evaluative/critical question 132

Retracing our steps: an initial view of Dialectic 133
Retracing steps in housing research 133
What are these authors doing? 138
Towards a more precise understanding of Dialectic 140
Some illustrations of Dialectic 167
Implications for housing research 168

8 Implementation and the future questions 173

An initial view of implementation 174
Implementation in housing research 176

The implementation functional specialties in research-policy linkages 182
Foundations and the transformative/visionary question 194
Policies and the policy question 199
Systematics and the strategic question 200
Communications and the practical question 202
Implications for housing research 203

PART III
Function Collaboration: a unifying framework 207

9 Functional Collaboration, science and progress 209

Functional Collaboration: the inter-relationship and unity of the functional specialties 211
Functional Collaboration as a scientific approach 215
Functional Collaboration as a framework for collaborative creativity 218
Making progress in housing 220

Conclusion 223

Bibliography 232
Index 256