

Review of Sean McNelis, *Making Progress in Housing: A framework for collaborative research* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 266 pages. ISBN 978-0-415-70346-8

Housing is a daily requirement of human living. It may be as simple as a lean-to, as iconic as a single-family house with a white picket fence, or as grandiloquent as one of Donald Trump's condominium developments. Even when we are on the move, we require shelter and so we have tents in campsites, motor homes, cabins on cruise ships and trains, motels and hotels. Because the provision of housing is of vital interest to every human being, we all have an experience of it. There are the memories of the house or houses we grew up in, what they looked and smelled like, where they were situated. We are presently housed. We visit other people's houses. We compare. Still later, as Gaston Bachelard suggests, we imagine 'with indomitable courage' the dwelling we might live in 'late in life.' And where do we end up? Is it 'lighter and larger' than our childhood home? Or are we to be warehoused in a narrow metal bed in an 8' by 10' box in a sub-standard 'old folks' home, staffed by a rough, uncaring crowd?

We can, then, readily grasp that housing is vital and social, personal and cultural. But what is 'better?' What is real progress in housing? That is quite the question, because if we acknowledge the full complexity of Lonergan's worldview of emergent probability we realize that understanding systematically what 'housing' and 'better' mean is not simply a matter of applying a little of what everyone already knows. In *Making Progress in Housing: A framework for collaborative research*, Sean

McNelis does not answer the question. He realizes that answering this question is not the task of one person. Yet, by asking two simple questions McNelis unveils both the confusion and fragmentation around the study of the provision of housing as well as the honest efforts of housing researchers and policy-makers to figure it out. What he adds to the discussion is a carefully rendered programmatic sketch of how the method of functional collaboration can order the quest to understand and develop better housing.

McNelis brings to this task thirty years' experience in housing management, housing policy, and housing research and so has experienced firsthand the fragmentation of housing research and the frustration and challenges of implementing a truly progressive house policy. The intersection of his focus is where 'research' meets 'policy' but he sets his meaning for 'research' and 'policy' in the context of the eightfold division of labor of functional collaboration. Thus, 'research' is the first functional specialty, but it is also encompasses the remaining seven specialties. Most of the book is taken up with re-setting current housing research and policy within the context of functional collaboration. As such the book is addressed to the global community of housing researchers and policy makers, and it explains how housing researchers and policymakers might understand their work in the context of functional collaboration. To do this McNelis has not only to make clear the basis of the division of labor, he has to demonstrate the potential for improved efficiency this reordering of tasks would provide. He also has to come to terms with the intersection of the complex genres of housing research and policy. 'Housing' happens in the environment, where the environment is both natural and human and involves the full range of values. It involves all the traditional fields of geology, biology, psychology, archeology, geography, medicine and health, human kinetics, economics, political science, history, anthropology, sociology, education, and so on. It includes the plethora of interdisciplinary approaches and studies such as religious studies, policy studies, gender

studies, and legal studies. It must also include the arts and humanities, architecture and engineering.

McNelis does an outstanding job of introducing functional collaboration to the community of housing researchers. With well-chosen examples he carefully works through the literature of housing research to show convincingly how exactly functional collaboration is nothing less than a complete reordering of the field. Readers of this journal likely will not need to be convinced as to the value of functional collaboration. Nonetheless the book has tremendous value as an account of how functional collaboration would more efficiently order and control the work of the social scientist. As such it is an account of how the implementation of functional collaboration would constitute a scientific revolution in the social sciences.

I would like to zero in on some outstanding features of McNelis's account of functional collaboration.

First, *Making Progress in Housing* is uncompromising in its recognition of the inability of common sense alone to adequately move housing research forward. Repeatedly McNelis stresses the need to shift from common sense to theory in housing research, and in doing so he affirms that the method of functional collaboration is the operative basis for a new scientific revolution that upends the current understanding of what social science is in its relationship to social policy. In the process he provides a sound approach for reintegrating the two solitudes of arts and sciences. Second, his account of the shift to theory is set within the foundations of generalized empirical method. This allows McNelis to show how functional collaboration provides a genuine eight-spanned bridge for overcoming the present divide between putative theory and better practice. Finally, in its expression and execution the book makes crystal clear the link between personal appropriation and progress in housing research that is the core of the oft-repeated line from page 141 of *A Third Collection*: "Generalized empirical method operates on a combination of both the data

of sense and the data of consciousness: it does not treat of objects without taking into account the corresponding subject; it does not treat of the subject's operations without taking into account the corresponding object."

There are many highlights in this book: the treatment of each specialty, the subtlety with which each specialty is linked to the others, the clear appreciation of the shortcoming of our common sense and the need for a systematic approach, the integration of the structure of the good and the scale of values into the account of functional collaboration, the pervasive appreciation by the author of the dynamic and historical nature of both housing and human collaboration in housing, and a full-bore, level-headed acceptance of the obstacles of the biases and the need for recovery. For students of Lonergan's method, it is a terrific exploration of how Lonergan's achievement can be implemented in social science research. What I really hope, however, is that housing researchers take this book seriously. It is a foundational document in housing research that has the potential to establish a significantly better culture of housing research. Then we can truly dream of better and affordable shelter for everyone.

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