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Critical realism and housing studies: An explanation for diverging housing solutions.

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Critical Realism and Housing Studies addresses a number of fundamental issues in housing and comparative research. It asks why different housing 'solutions', such as sprawling Australian home ownership and compact Dutch social rental housing have evolved since the 19th century. The book carefully justifies why explanation for different housing solutions lies beyond the description of key events, policies and housing outcomes. It argues the case for a new ontological perspective in housing studies - that of critical realism, which directs attention towards the causal tendencies of complex, open and structured housing phenomena. From this perspective an argument is made for the definition key social arrangements that promote different housing solutions, to be abstracted from concrete historical case study research. These dynamic arrangements concern the property rights, circuit of savings and investment as well as labour and welfare relations that develop differently over time and space and are considered to influence alternative pathways in housing history.

In this book readers will find three distinct but related parts. The first evaluates ontological and methodological alternatives for comparative housing research; the second provides two historical case studies inspired by critical realist ontology; and the third and final part compares the causal tendencies that can explain diverging housing pathways in Australia and The Netherlands.

Critical Realism and Housing Studies is an accessible and constructive book for anyone interested in methodological and conceptual issues in housing and urban research. It demonstrates the practical significance of philosophy in perceiving housing and urban history and, in particular, illustrates the usefulness of critical realism in conceptualising research issues and developing explanatory strategies.

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