

A Review of The Models of Land Development Process: The Agency Models

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Abstract

In paper 1 it was revealed that both the equilibrium and event-sequence models of the land development process lack emphasis on the relationship of agents involved where the actors are treated as homogenous, with equal freedom of entry and having perfect knowledge of the market. In ^{the} paper 2, the agency model suggested that, in reality, the actors are heterogenous, monopoly powers dominate and knowledge is imperfect. However, it is concluded that this model gives too much emphasis to the actors and the interactions. Hence, it is too descriptive and lacking critical appraisal as well as mention of the wider forces.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Unlike the event-sequence approach, the agency model focuses on the behaviour and role of specific actors in the development process. The models examine the roles which different actors adopt in the development process, stressing the decisions and actions that they take as well as the interests which guide their strategies. Hence the argument and reasoning of these models are structured within the concepts of the humanist critical framework. In a way, these models are an advance over sequential models because they widen the scope to cover decisions and decision-makers as well as events and activities.

2.0 THE AGENCY MODEL

In any development process many actors can be involved. Lichfield (1956, 4) includes :

'The original landowner or any subsequent purchaser of the land; the developer who undertakes the process; the building industry, including the professions connected with it; the legal profession; the public authorities; the persons lending money; the ultimate consumer who may be tenant or owner of the finished development'.

Further as Lambert and Underwood (1984, 16) note :

'As well as a wide range of different steps, there is also a wide range of different audiences and actors involved in the development process. These different actors have different understandings, expectations and objectives and are often in conflict with one another'.

It is, therefore, important to note the relationship of agents involved in the development process. Yet, as revealed in earlier discussion, the event sequence models ignore this aspect and neo-classical economists treat all the actors as homogenous, with equal freedom of entry and having perfect knowledge of the market. However, in reality, the actors are heterogeneous, monopoly powers may dominate and knowledge is imperfect. Various authors have, therefore, brought these points forward in their work on the development process. Hence, this has led to the introduction of agency models. However, as Gore and Nicholson (1991) comment, such models are mostly hybrids merely interpolating the position of actors at relevant points within a sequential flow. As such, it is not surprising that the features of the models reflect and are much influenced by the limitations of the event sequence models.

Under this approach, two sub - categories may be distinguished. Gore and Nicholson (1991) note that the agency models consist of the individualist and the interactive approaches. Within the individualist approach, the actors are considered as independent and autonomous. The actors are said as to have the

ability to make decisions and take actions in their own interest without reference to other actors in the process. On the other hand, the interactive approach assumes the need of interactions, negotiations and bargaining activities between interested parties in the development process.

One straight forward example of an agency model of the individualist approach is the model devised by Bryant et al (1982). In this model the agents are categorised as primary or secondary decision agents. As shown in Figure 1 and 2, these agents enter the land conversion process at the stages in which they are most likely to be involved. The primary agents are those with direct interests in the land, either in terms of ownership or of use or both. They include farmers, developers, builders and occupiers. On the other hand, secondary agents are those with indirect interest in the land or development, usually related to public aspects such as the planners and politicians, legal requirements, for instance, lawyers, or related to financial aspects, for example the realtors and financiers.

The advantage of this model is that it relates the decisions and events of the development process to the actors responsible or roles involved at each stage. However, as admitted by Bryant et al (1982), the model displays only one of the many chains and combinations of agents that might characterise a development project or site. In addition, the model fails to take into consideration the relationships that exist between the various decision agents. Apart from these, in this model, the land conversion process is viewed as a closed system, in which there is no consideration of the role of external factors and the ways in which they might influence decisions and events at different stages.

Another individualist model is that devised by Drewett (1973) (see Figure 3). In this case the focus is on land conversion from rural to private residential use. It is a more sophisticated model, whereby the process, 'involves a multiplicity of decisions and actions by individuals and organisations in both the public and private sectors' (Drewett, 1973, 163).

He argued that in understanding the land development process, attention should be on the developers because they are central to the development process. Drewett shares this idea with some earlier analysts such as Craven (1969) and Kaiser and Weiss (1970) (see Figure 4) who argued that the developer is the key co-ordinator and catalyst for development whose actions are activated by perceptions of potential yields.

The main thrust of Drewett's approach is to associate the key decisions of the development process and the actors who make them with the various stages from non-urban use to completed development. In addition to the presentation of this model in a graphic form as shown in Figure 3, this model is also presented in tabular form as in Table 1. Here, Drewett draws out the relationships between major aspects of the process at each stage - events, decisions, actors and sources of finance. In contrast to the previously reviewed model, much more detail is included here, although the process is conceived as a linear sequence. Thus, as Gore and Nicholson (1991, 714) comment, one interesting element revealed in this model is that : 'the significant underlying mechanism driving the process onwards is the decision to proceed at each stage; each decision is seen as unlocking the door to the next phase of the process'.

Despite its strength in relation to the way in which it highlights the linkages between different elements, with an emphasis on financial support, the model also has some weaknesses. First, although the identification of internal linkages is useful, there is no indication given on the precise nature of these relationships as well as the vast amount of negotiations involved in conducting them. Second, the list of 'decision-agents' involved is not exhaustive in that the builders and contractors are omitted from the decision-making process. Third, insufficient regard is given to the constraints that limit the developers' actions. These are the constraints imposed by legal restrictions and duties as well as the actions and interests of other agents in the process which include public authorities as providers of infrastructure, commercial firms as rival developers or financial backers, and ordinary citizens as opponents, or promoters of development (Goodchild and Munton, 1986).

Figure 1 : Schematic view of the land market in the city's countryside.

Source : from Bryant, 1982, Fig.1.2.

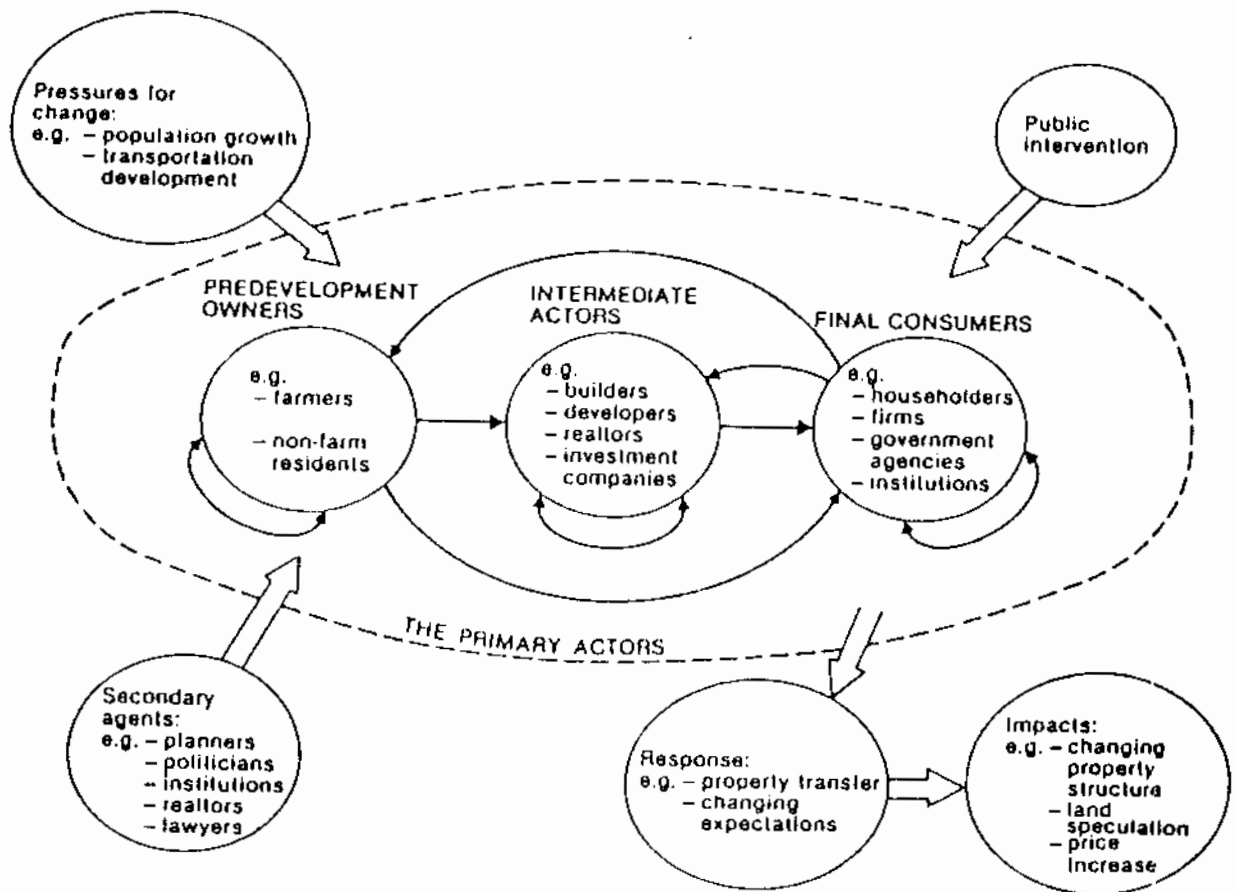
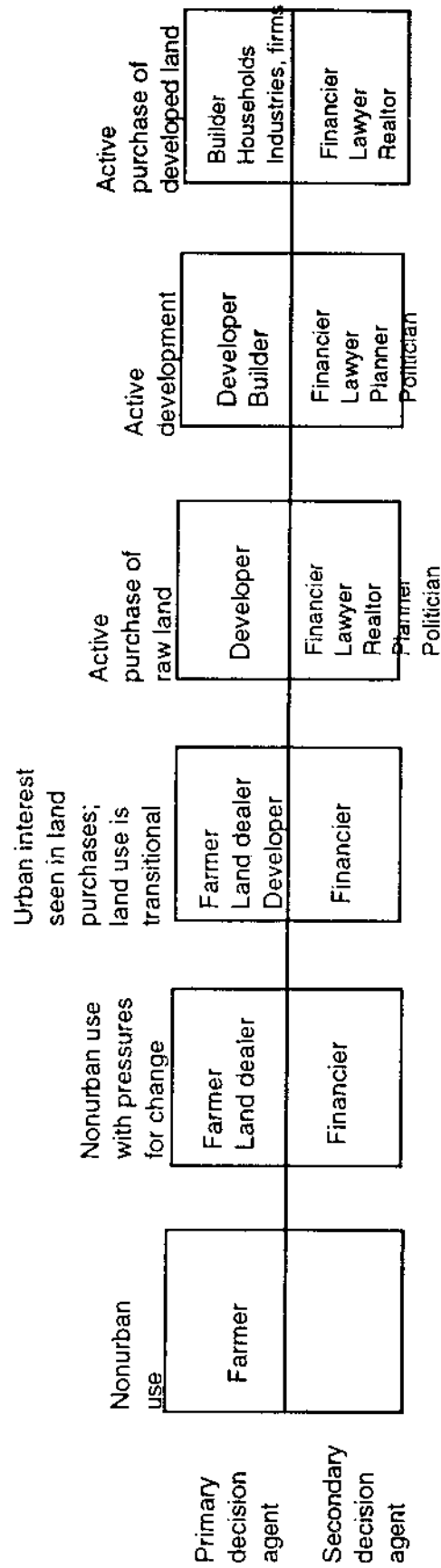


Figure 2 : The land conversion process : stages of development.



Source : Bryant et al, 1982.

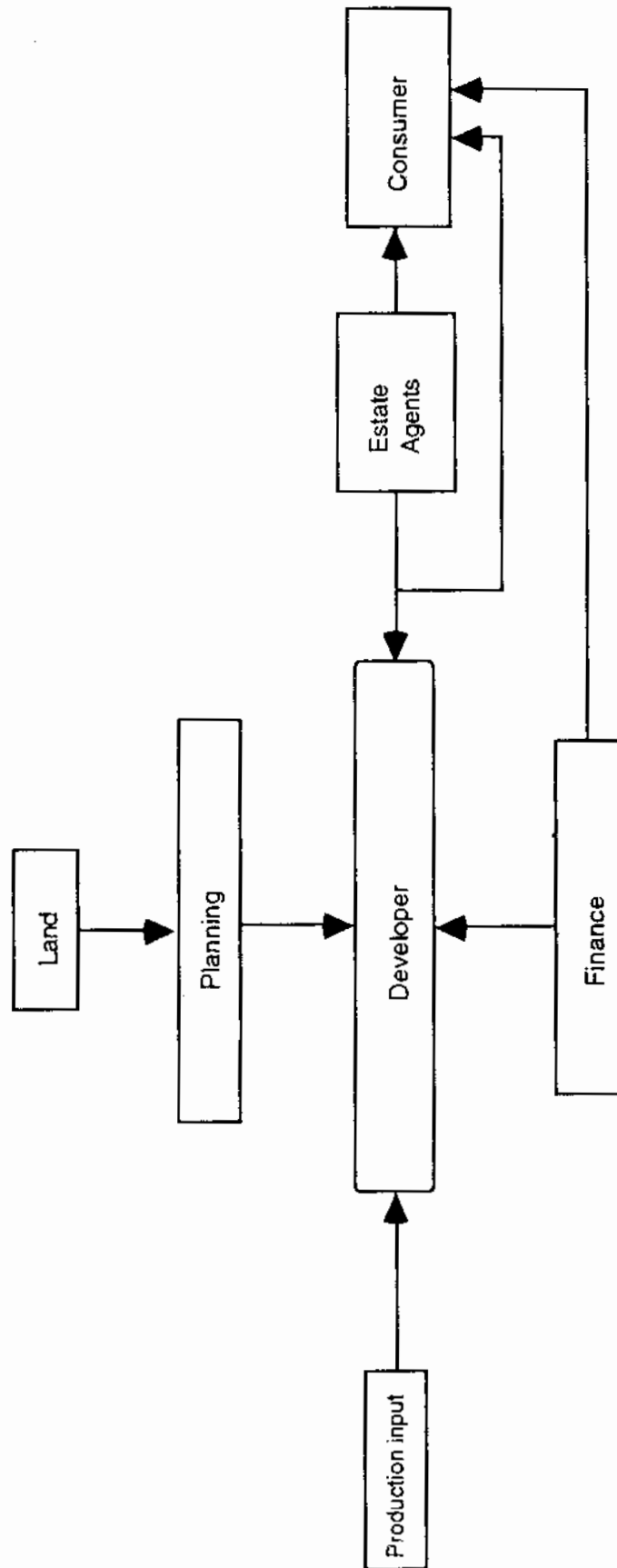


Figure 3 : Relationships between decision agents in the land development process

Figure 4 : The Residential Land Conversion Process
Source : Kaiser and Weiss, 1970, 31

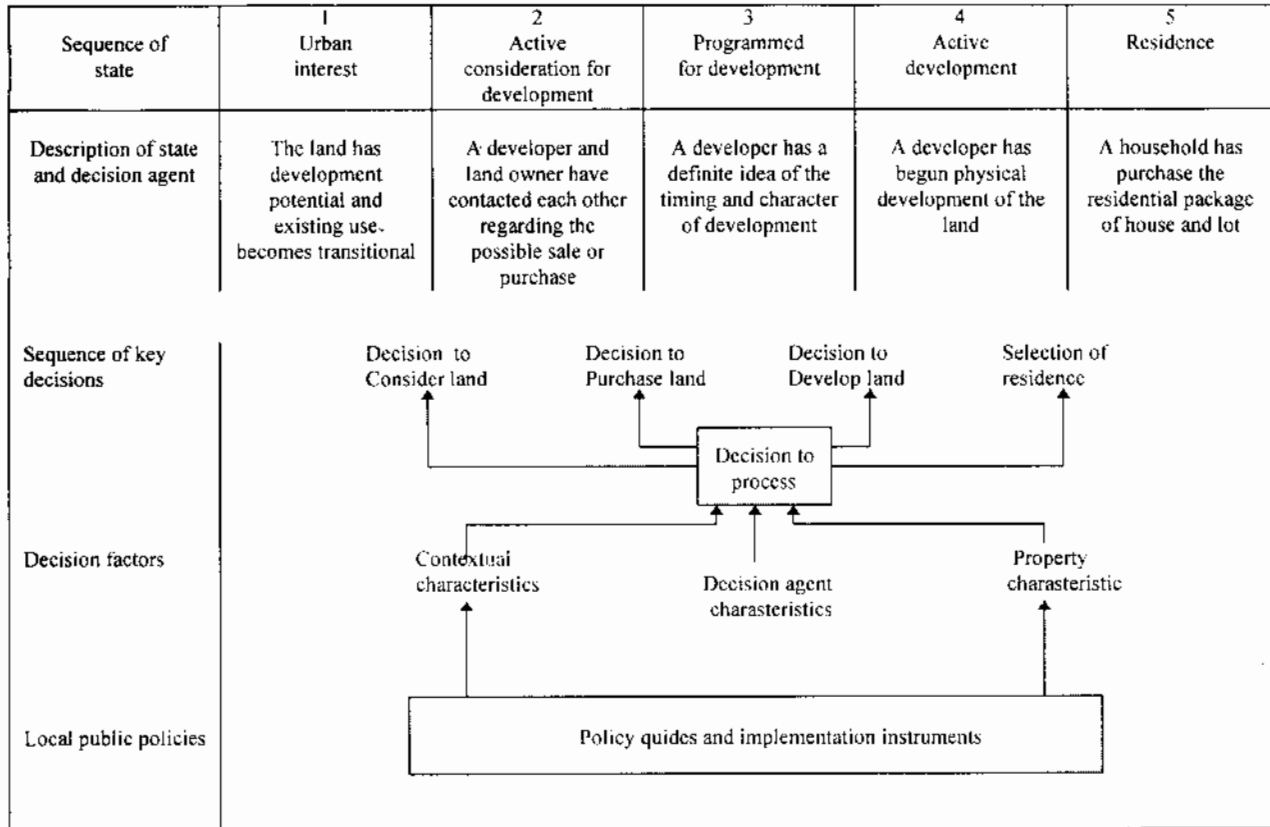


Figure 5 : A Classification of Developers by Purpose of Development

	Before dev. SHORT TERM	After dev. LONG TERM (leasing out)	LONG TERM (owning & occupying)
Short term	Entrepreneurial builder	Land developer investor	Developer user
Long term	Asset clearing (leasing out) user	Property improve probably investment switch	Expanding developer or rentier
Long term	Capitalising Owning & Occupying	Change in returns assets from property	Owner-occupier developer

Source ; McNamara, 1983, 91

McNamara (1983) attempted to incorporate the time factor into the general description of a development process. He argued that the structure of actors involved in the land development process is not general but varies across both time and space with respect to the identifiable features of the development process. He further developed this idea into a classification of developers' interests according to time scale of their involvement in a development project (see Figure 5). This approach can be likened to Form's (1954) early insight in the reality of development activity in that it consists of a plurality of actors, roles, interests and strategies. The model highlighted the complexity of development activity by linking the direction of changes on agents roles and interests according to different time scale.

Goodchild and Munton (1985), on the other hand, devised a general model of the land development process based upon two key decision points:

1. the identification of land as being suitable for development; and
2. the initiation of construction work upon that land.

According to the authors, there are six different routes that a developable site may follow. In turn each route passes through at least three or four decision nodes in order for a successful development to occur. These nodes are (1) the allocation of land in a plan, (2) the sale of land to a developer, (3) the granting of planning permission and (4) the commencement of construction. At each node one or more of the principal actors, that is, the developer, the planners and the land owners, is involved in the decision making as to whether or not to proceed, the implication being that a negative outcome results in the revision of the project in question, the formulation of a new one, or abandonment (see Figure 8 of paper 1).

The model is flexible in the sense that the first three nodes may occur in any order. In addition, it strongly underlines the variation in the roles performed by different actors according to the different routes that may be taken by a development site through the process. However, the authors admit that the model is a considerable simplification and that the six routes are merely the most common ones and by no means exhaustive.

On the other hand, the model has a number of serious weaknesses. As with the previous example, the linearity of the model means that it cannot handle redevelopment and the recycling of urban land. The assumption that the disposal and subsequent occupation has no part to play in development whereas in reality different development strategies are likely to be adopted. In addition, the provision of infrastructure is also ignored. The effects of external factors as well as government policies are also not taken into consideration. As a conclusion the original promise that constraints on actions and decisions form an integral component is not fulfilled by both Goodchild and Munton (1985).

Hence, in this individualist approach, the major problem concerns the assumption that in the land development process, individual decisions are carried out in isolation from the other actors involved and from other economic activity.

Unlike the models under the individualist approach, interactive approaches attempt to incorporate the relationships of bargaining and consultation that are likely to characterise development activity (Gore and Nicholson, 1991). These are based on two key assumptions: first that any decision or action in the development process will condition all other decisions and actions; and second, that most decisions and actions only occur after negotiation with other actors has taken place.

Marriot's (1965) model is probably the first of its kind exploring the relationship of the actors in the process. In his model, the developers are seen as 'men [sic] who act on hunches' (Marriot, 1965, 35) rather than the economic rationality as assumed in the neo-classical approach. Similarly, Marriot notes the power relationships which exist between the developers with other key actors of development.

The model devised by Chamberland (1972) is also one of the earliest model under this category (see Figure 6). It links the role of developers to the various stages of development process in which the developer is seen as playing the key part as entrepreneur to integrate and co-ordinate the actions of all other actors from the initiation to the completion stage. At the same time he also recognises the fact that the operation of the development process depends on the interaction of actors which may be classified into four groups. They are the suppliers (among whom landowners and financiers are the most important), intermediaries, who perform a brokerage or match-making function, consultants and regulators. However, although it recognises the interaction of actors, this model is rather over simplified and lacks the inclusion of consideration of external forces as well as time dimension.

Ball's (1983) empirical study also highlights the power relations between house builders which are based on size and internal organisation of the companies in terms of how they raise finance, maintain their land holdings and negotiate with planners. He also notes that, unlike in the neo-classical model, profit maximisation is not necessarily the criterion upon which companies work, instead decisions are based around a variety of factors.

The modified 'development- pipeline' model as outlined by Barrett and Whitting (1983) in their study of the local authorities in land supply is a good example of the agency model belonging to the interactive approach category. Unlike the original 'development pipeline' model (as introduced in 1978) which was rather sketchy in the treatment of the influence of external factors of development process, the modified version is said to be more powerful and realistic in its approach. Barrett and Whitting (1983) argued that there are five principal actors involved in achieving development. These are: one, the developer who orchestrates and co-ordinates the inputs in the process; two, the funder, who provides capital to be invested in the process; three, the builder, who undertakes the construction work; four, the advisers, who provide a range of professional services, such as financial appraisal or legal work; and five, the public sector, which is responsible for the regulation of land use and the provision of infrastructure.

However, in reality one agent does not necessarily perform only one particular role. Indeed, each agent may function in a combination of several roles. In this light, as Gore and Nicholson (1991, 718) note:

'the development process may be viewed as a series of functions or activities that bring together resources and the agents that control them. The term resources is used to denote not only finance, land, labour and building materials, but also professional skills and services, such as design and marketing, as well as government powers of regulation. The fact that these resources are controlled by different actors means that there exists a mutual interdependence between them if the process is to operate successfully; in other words, development is a process of 'resource exchange' between agents, usually with one kind of resource (for example power, money) being exchanged for another (for instance land and planning consent)'.

The model covers not only the interests and objectives of the different actors, but also attitudes to risk and reward (see Table 2). This model reveals that the development process is made up of a series of interactions and transactions between the various actors involved which takes the form of negotiation over the sharing of rewards in relation to the use of resources contributed towards the achievement of the development project. Hence, it indicates the importance of the bargaining powers of different actors based on the control both of resources and of information.

Although the model is certainly more powerful and realistic than any reviewed so far, it lacks specific detail about who does what and exactly what happens when, as well as the overall context in which the central negotiations and decision-making take place. However, this provides a flexible means of studying all kinds of development rather than a rigid and static picture of an idealised process.

Table 1 : The land development process

Source : Drewett, 1973.

Stages of development	Non-urban use	Non-urban use; under urban shadow	Urban interest	Active consideration (1): planning permission	Active consideration (2): purchase of land	Active development	Purchase of development
description	in agriculture, or woodland, or other non-urban use; possibly idle	changed use; greater intensity of use, multiple use, recreation, idle	decision agent recognises land has potential for a time period	agent contacts planning authority and/or government for development permission	agent contacts another agent re possible land sale	physical development of land	purchase of property and occupation
decisions	opportunity costs lower than present use	relative location change or pressure of opportunity costs	decision to consider land	decision to purchase land	decision to purchase land	decision to develop land	decision to purchase
decision agent	landowner, speculator, developer	landowner, developer, speculator	planner, developer, landowner, speculator	developer, planner	developer, planner	developer, planner	consumer
financial support	unchanged	agricultural mortgage corporation	preliminary arrangement of financing	preliminary arrangement of financing	purchase of raw land loan	construction loan	mortgage local authority

Figure 6 : A conceptual outline of the development process : participant involvement

STEPS TAKEN BY DEVELOPER	PARTICIPANTS				
	ACTIVE	PASSIVE	CONSULTANTS	INTERMEDIARIES	REGULATORS
<u>Acquisition</u> of a site	Landowner (s) Land - developer	Lenders	Appraisers Lawyers	Realtors Lawyers Assembly agents	
<u>Preparation</u> of the land	Land - developer	Landowner(s) Lender(s)	Planners Engineers Architects Lawyers		Planning Board Council Minister O.M.B
<u>Production</u> of the buildings	Builder	Land- developer	Architects	Mortgage Brokers	Building Inspectors
<u>Marketing</u> of the completed establishment space	Builder consumer	Mortgage lender	Lawyers	Realtors Lawyers	

DEFINITIONS :

Active participants - those decision agents who have an equity interest in the land and are those actively involved in improving its value.

Passive participants - those decision agents who have an enquiry interest in the land but no active involvement

Intermediaries - those agents who liaise between one and another of the active or passive participants.

Consultants - agents called in by the active participants to advise on some aspects of development.

Regulators - agents who represent the public's interest in the development, and whose approval is required.

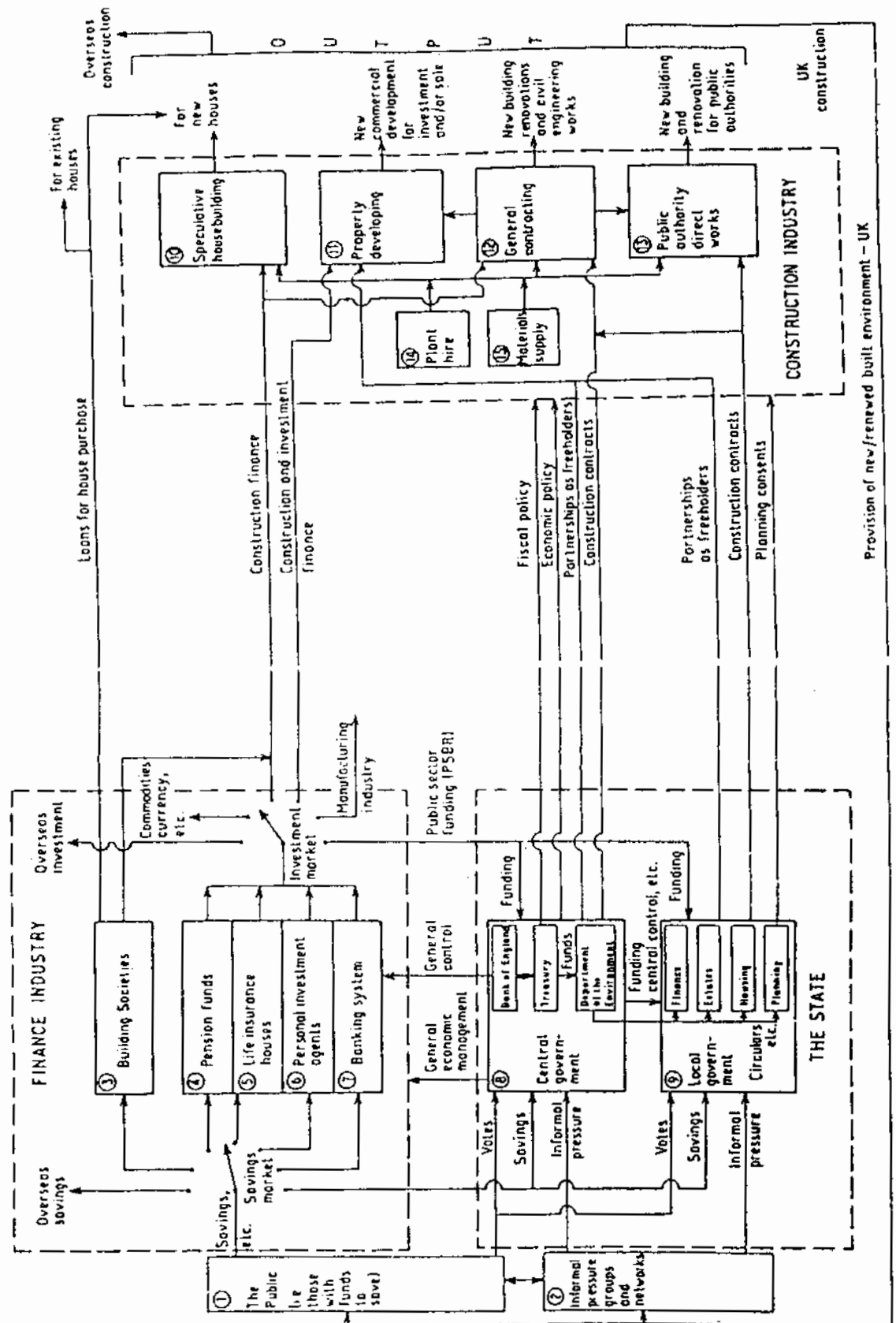
This table does not purport to include all the participants under each category (that would be impossible), but it attempts to include those whose involvement is most significant to the development process.

Source : Chamberland, 1972, 18.

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Figure 7 : The development system in the UK

Source : Ambrose, P., 1986



In an attempt to provide this context, Ambrose (1986) and Ambrose and Colenutt (1977) marked the boundaries of what is called the 'development system'. In these models the diverse nature of actors involved is expressed. They argued that the development system is made of three main fields, namely the finance industry, the state, and the construction industry. The general public is included as a more peripheral influence, either as individuals (as savers, voters and so on) or as pressure groups (Ambrose, 1986). Each group has its own objectives and strategies for being involved in the development industry (see Figure 7). It is these institutions that determine the level and direction of private investment in the property market. They are, therefore, not responding to a simple demand-supply model as described by the neo-classical economists, but instead are in the position to influence it.

Like Barrett and Whitting's (1983) model, this development system model attempts to identify separate functions rather than mutually exclusive actors or organisations. It emphasises that people may have a number of roles in the development process. This model indicates the ways interaction between the various elements can lead not only to different types of development but also to different patterns of investment. Ambrose (1986) argued that, in order for the system to occur, the system has to be 'energised' by a flow of money, political power, and/or materials along the linkages. However, this flow may be interrupted or diverted into other economic activity or into overseas construction projects.

This model has a number of strengths. It clearly shows the relationships that exist between different groups of actors in the process, rather than treating them as isolated individuals. Constraints that limit the actions and external influences by other models are incorporated as integral part of the system. In addition, the model may be applied to the full range of development approaches, namely, land conversion, redevelopment, and building conversion or change of use. However, this model lacks details on the question of land assembly and the organisation of construction. There is also no coverage of the post construction stage of the process, implying that the financing of occupation and tasks of management and maintenance lie outside the development process (Gore and Nicholson, 1991).

Like Ambrose (1986), Fraser (1985) similarly discusses in detail the role of financial institutions in the development process. Insurance companies and pension funds in terms of their activities, functions and investment policies towards property have a significant input into the cyclical nature of the property market, that is, the way financial institutions fuel property booms or alternatively disinvest from property which result in severe consequences on the state of the property market and prejudices, in particular, the developers' fortunes (Fraser, 1985).

In addition to the various authors discussing the heterogeneous nature of developers themselves and how they interact and response to financial institutions, other writers have focused on a number of different players in the development process, that is, by exploring their role and impact. For example, Goodchild and Munton (1985) are interested in the relative power of the different actors such as planners, landowners and developers in the development process. However, they argue that the most significant group which neo-classical and Marxist economists have ignored or treated as homogenous is landowners. Goodchild and Munton (1985) argued that landowners hold significant monopoly powers within the process and need to be differentiated and focused upon.

Adams and May (1991) further attempt to explain the relationship between the behaviour of landowners and the planning stage of the land development process. Their study indicated that owners who are active in the development process but not involved in the local planning process were generally found in existing built up areas where planning applications and, if necessary, appeals provide a quicker way to promote land use change. In contrast owners who are passive in the development process but active in the local planning process included one who had no immediate development plans but who wished to prevent the inclusion of his site into the green belt in order to retain the possibility of long term development (see Figure 8). In addition, Massey and Catalano (1978) had previously shown that landowners

Figure 8 : Landowner behaviour in the land development process in case study plans.

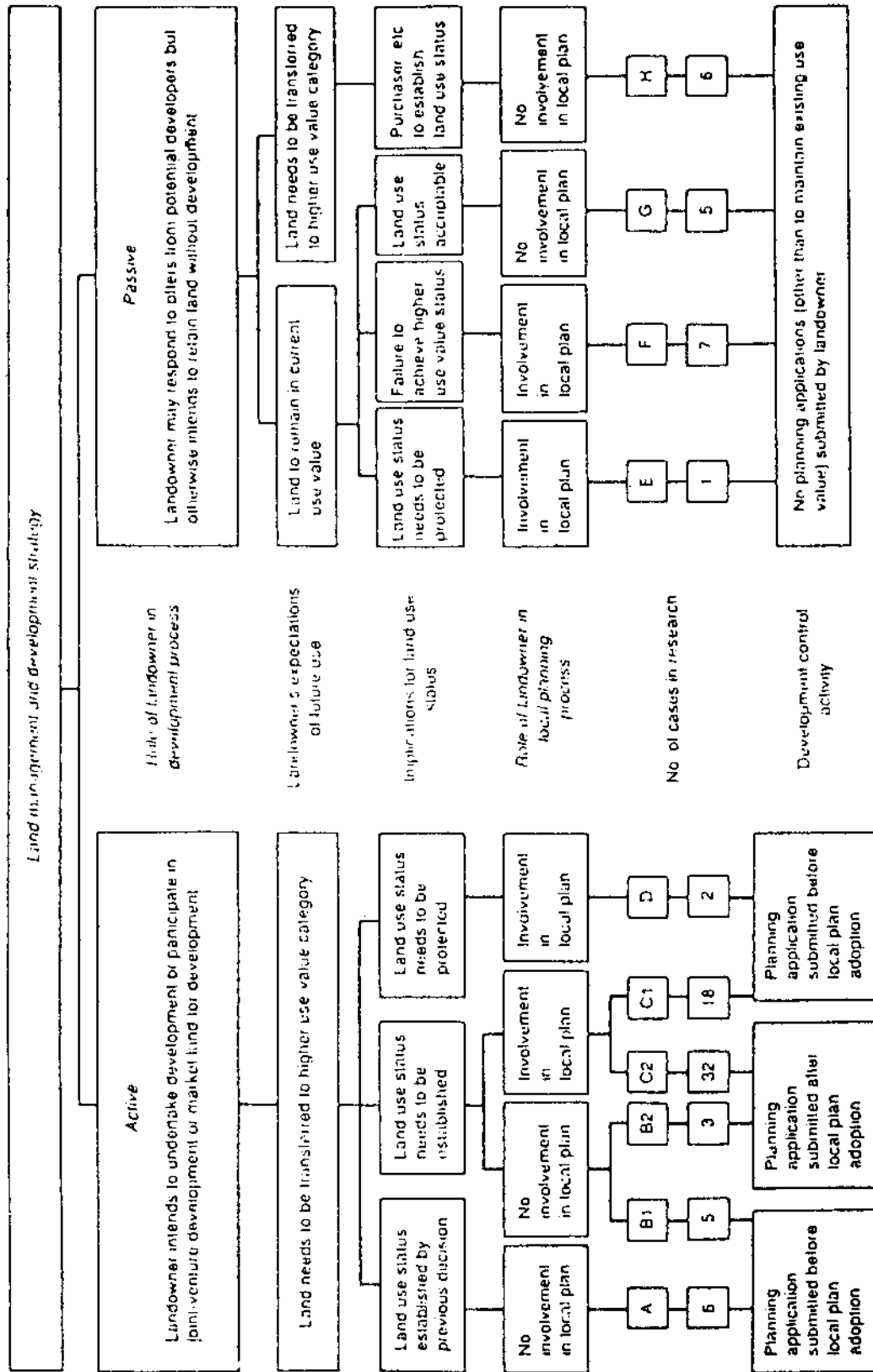


Figure 9 : Major landownership groups : some basic descriptive characteristics.

Landowner	Predominant types of land & land use	Main activity	Rent extracted through:
Church	Urban residential low income residential high income offices Agricultural	Rent Develop Rent	Necessary wage Wage & revenue Commercial & banking capital Industrial capital
Landed aristocracy	Urban residential low income residential high income offices/shops Agricultural	Rent Rent/develop Develop Rent/develop (owner-occupation) Rent	Necessary wage Wage & revenue Commercial & banking capital Industrial capital (profit) Revenue
Landed gentry	Sporting estates Agricultural	Rent (owner-occupation) Rent	(profit) Industrial capital
Crown Estate	Urban residential low income residential high income offices Agricultural	Rent Rent/develop Develop Rent	Necessary wage Wage & revenue Commercial & banking capital Industrial capital
Owner-farmers Manuf. industry (construction cos.)	Agricultural Urban industrial Urban office/shop residential	(owner-occupation) (owner-occupation) Develop Sale	(profit) (profit) Commercial & banking capital Wage
Financial insts.	Urban offices industrial Agricultural	Develop/invest Develop Invest	Commercial & banking capital Industrial capital Industrial capital
Property cos.	Urban residential offices/shops industrial	Rent (Develop/invest) Develop	Wage & revenue Commercial & banking capital Industrial capital

Source : Massey and Catalano, 1978, 65.

interests vary depending on the role of the land-owning interest in their wider social and economic relation (see Figure 9).

On the other hand, McNamara (1984; 1987) and Daniels et al (1990) are more interested in the role of estate agents in the development process and how they interrelate with developers. For example, they document the growth of the local estate agent in the UK and internationally furnishing a variety of examples. They argue that estate agents have a significant role in mediating information in the property market acting as information gatherers and also middlemen in property transactions and negotiations. Without such professional expertise the smooth running of the property market would be severely hampered. Table 3 shows a summary of the type of estate agents involve in the development process as identified by McNamara (1982).

McNamara(1988) further developed the agency model by focusing on the interests of agents. He argued that agencies involved in the development process can be systematised according to the roles played in the process and the interest which directs these roles. Figure 10 summarises his conclusion as to the way interests in land are generalised.

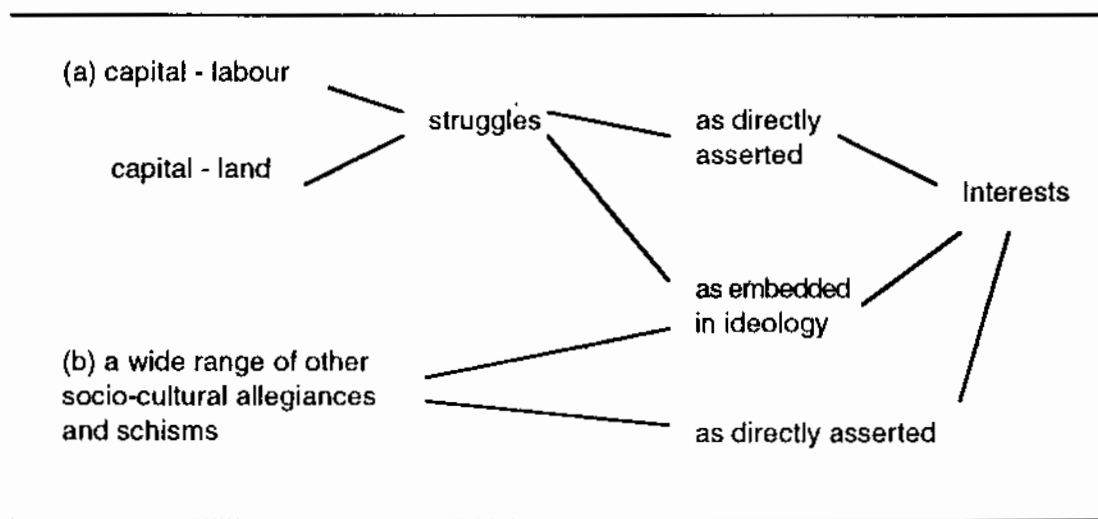
3.0 CONCLUSION

To conclude, it is evident that agency models provide a more rounded picture of the development process than purely event-based models. They widen the scope to cover the roles that different actors play. As such the models help to contribute another perspective to build towards a fuller appreciation of the process. However, the focus on actors and their roles where decisions are seen merely as the product of the function being performed, has shifted attention away from the factors of constraints that help to determine a certain decision. In addition, as Gore and Nicholson (1991) argued specifically, little attention is paid to the ever-changing relationships of conflicts and collaboration that exist between social agents or to institutional and other structures within which such relationships are played out. Since the range of agents involve is potentially vast, as Healey (1992, 34) argued:

' Analytically, it is important to distinguish actual agencies, individual roles within these and their relationships from the roles individuals and agencies play in the process and the strategies and interests promoted in pursuance of these roles '.

The agency model has been criticised as giving too much emphasis to the actors and the interactions in terms of explaining the outcomes of the built environment. It is also criticised as being too descriptive and lacking critical appraisal as well as mention of the wider forces, both economic and political which generate and govern the actions of the actors in question. It is these structural factors which ultimately affect the structure of provision yet are not clearly interrelated into institutional analysis of the development process and are often weakly developed.

Figure 10 : The generation of interests in land



Source : McNamara, 1988, p.166.

Table 2: Agency roles, interests and objectives in the development process

Agencies	Roles in process	Agency interests & objective
1. Private Property companies and house builders	Entrepreneur seeking to co-ordinate or undertake development	Maximise profits dependent on process in long term but typically only short term interest in product: various strategies for dealing with risk.
Financial institution*	Supply development and investment funding for property development	Liabilities determine investment requirements (yield, liquidity, security) aim to match liabilities with appropriate investment.
Construction companies contractors	Construction	Dependent on process in long term but otherwise short-term provision of service: financial return diversification to reduce risk.
2. Public Statutory undertakers	Infrastructure provision (highways, gas, electricity drainage, water supply and sewerage).	Fulfil agency duties and functions as given in legislation: relatively low priority : also undertake development to meet own requirements (as do the nationalised industries).

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Table 2 : Agency roles, interests and objectives in the development process

Public development agencies **	Undertake/facilitate development in accordance with policy initiatives	Again aim to fulfil duties and functions as set by statute; more direct interest than statutory undertakers in progressing development
Local planning authorities	Regulation of development and other use of land	Conformity of product of development process to planning policy.
Local authorities as developers	Undertake or facilitate	In relation to wider statutory development roles (e.g. as leading to development needs/ requirements, or in pursuit of other policy aims (eg. economic development) rather than financial return per se.

Source : Adapted from Barrett and Whitting (1983)

* Insurance companies, pension funds and banks

** For example new town development corporations, UDCs, Land Authority for Wales, Scottish and Welsh Development Agencies .

Table 3: Types of agents involved in land development process

Type of agent	Finding sites for development(a)	Obtaining planning permission(b)	Selling property
Local estate agent	Local chains of estate agents	Local agent Agents specialising in a particular field	Local chains of estate agents
Freelance agent	Land agents working freelance	Planning consultants- working freelance	
Retained land agent	Agents working for a development company	Planning consultants- working for a development company	
Incorporated agent	Land agency departments within a development company	In-house planning experts	sales department within a development company

(a) From McNamara (1982)

(b) From Henderson et al (1980)

Source : McNamara, 1983, 104

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