*Policy and practice*

# So what if housing research is thriving? Researchers' perceptions of the use of housing studies

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**Abstract.** By various indicators of scholarly viability, housing research is thriving. Its relevance, however, is unclear. This paper addresses questions concerning the practical significance of housing research. Is anyone actually using the findings? If so, who, how, and to which ends? A survey of 41 authors of articles, published in this journal from 1996 to 1999, provides insights into perceptions by housing researchers of how practitioners and policymakers use their work. Most respondents think that their studies have practical significance. However, they often see the responses to research recommendations as inadequate because of ineffective communication and presentation of findings, lack of time and interest on the part of policymakers, disjointed professional networks, and competing policy goals. The results of this study bring into focus several issues meriting further research, including the apparent lack of effective policy engagement by researchers, the political and economic context of research, the perspectives of policymakers and practitioners, and the role of comparative research in knowledge transfer.

**Key words:** engaged scholarship, housing policy, housing practice, housing research, knowledge transfer, lesson drawing, policy research, research utilization

## 1. Introduction

By several indicators of scholarly viability, housing research is thriving. For example, various new journals have been established.[1] This expansion in the number of outlets for housing studies has been associated with an increase in published articles. The number of book publications is up as well (see Table 1). Further, professional associations such as the European Network for Housing Research and the ISA network on Housing and the Built Environment, among others, enjoy strong memberships and regularly organize conferences that attract numerous participants. The growing volume of cross-national studies also attests to a rising interest in comparative

*Table 1.* Inclusion of "housing" in titles of periodical and book publications

| Data source | Annual average 1991–1995 | Annual average 1996–2000 |
|---|---|---|
| Books in Print[1] | 109 | 126 |
| Web of Science[2] | 356 | 422 |
| Article First[3] | 621 | 808 |

[1] *Books in Print.* 2001. R.R. Bowker, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. New Providence, New Jersey.

[2] Web of Science, Social and Behavioral Sciences, *Institute of Scientific Information* (ISI) (http://www.isinet.com/).

[3] Articles found in the table of contents of nearly 12,500 journals covering science, technology, medicine, social science, business, the humanities, and popular culture. Available through *Online Computer Library Center* (OCLC), used by over 36,000 libraries in 74 countries (http://www.oclc.org/oclc/menu/home1.htm).

research.[2] These are all positive signs. They suggest a field of research that is active and vibrant.

If housing research were in the doldrums, the situation would surely occasion some professional pondering. However, the relatively pleasant circumstances of today seem less conducive to a questioning attitude about what *it* is that seems to be going well. In our comfort, we may be less inclined to examine implicit assumptions about the value of our research. Housing studies are burgeoning, to be sure. But, we should ask, So what? Indeed, it is appropriate to be curious about what all this research activity amounts to. What are its implications? Is anyone actually using the outcomes of housing research? If so, who, how, and to which ends?

These questions will lead to different answers, depending on one's position and outlook. This paper examines a perspective that has been little explored, namely that of researchers themselves. It reports a study of the experiences and perceptions of a group of housing researchers concerning the use of their work. The broader context for the questions asked here is work on the applicability of social science research to real-world problems (e.g., Lazarsfeld et al., 1967; Bulmer, 1982) and the dissemination and adoption of policy research (e.g., Webber, 1986). One finding that stands out in particular is the seeming paradox that many researchers orient their work strongly to policy questions, yet, for various reasons, often do not effectively engage the processes of policy formulation and implementation. The results provide a context for self-reflection among housing researchers and bring into focus several directions for further study.

## 2. Housing research

As a multidisciplinary field, housing research draws on a number of disciplines and professions, including economics, geography, political science, planning, and architecture, among others. Each discipline and profession tends to focus on a particular set of questions. For example, economists tend to concern themselves with issues of housing finance (e.g., Kane, 1999), dynamics of supply and demand (e.g., Megbolugbe et al. 1991), and house prices (e.g., Macpherson and Sirmans, 2001). Geographers often investigate spatial aspects of housing, including patterns of residential segregation (e.g., van Kempen, 1998) and urban form (e.g., Bourne, 1996), local and regional housing markets (e.g., Lipshitz, 1997), urban regeneration and gentrification (e.g., Hackworth and Smith, 2001), and residential mobility (e.g., Dieleman et al., 2000). Architects concentrate on aspects of design, building materials, and construction techniques (e.g., Friedman, 1997). These foci of attention are neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive. They illustrate a tendency within disciplines to engage certain types of questions according to paradigms that characterize those disciplines more generally.[3]

As regards sociology, it is useful to distinguish between sociology *in* housing research and sociology *of* housing research (Michelson and Van Vliet--, 2001). As to the former, sociological studies in the field of housing have examined, for example, influences of the home environment on family life (e.g., Riemer, 1945) and the role of planning and design of the built environment in neighborly relations (e.g., Talen, 1999). Examples of other topics include the role of housing in community dynamics, race relations and social exclusion (e.g., Haynes, 2001), crime (e.g., Booth, 1981), and homeownership (e.g., Kemeny, 1981).

The second type of sociological study, the sociology *of* housing research, is part of a long tradition of work that has examined the practice of science. The primary purpose of this kind of research is not to develop insights into any particular substantive matter but to explore broader questions that underlie a variety of more specific issues related to the creation, diffusion, and utilization of knowledge. Such research has investigated the social and political processes behind agenda setting, the ideological basis of funding priorities, relationships among researchers in "invisible colleges," and the diffusion of research findings (see, for example, Willinsky, 2000). With respect to housing, examples of this type of research have examined the mutual influences of policy and research (Priemus, 2001), the linkages between societal developments and research themes (Michelson and Van Vliet--, 2001), the construction process (Riemer, 1976), the social construction of housing research (Clapham, 1997; Jacobs and Manzi, 2000), and the

professional practice, values, and belief systems of architects (Blau, 1984; Darke, 1984; Lipman, 1969).

The study reported in this paper falls into this second rubric. It concerns itself with the nexus between research and practice. More specifically, it examines perceptions by housing researchers of how practitioners and policy-makers use their work. The latter need to make informed decisions about appropriate interventions and they typically need answers quickly, with hard-to-come-by evaluative evidence on past policies or programs and not just market assessments. Researchers can play important roles in this regard and their perceptions of these roles help define their contributions to housing policy and practice.

## 3. Background of the study

The results reported here come from a survey among authors and co-authors of articles that were published in the *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment (JHBE)* during the 1996–1999 period.[4] The questionnaire inquired about personal characteristics of the authors, aspects of their work, and their perceptions of the use by practitioners and policymakers of housing research in general and their own work in particular.[5] Authors who did not respond received a reminder by e-mail. In total, 49 out of 77 replied. A number of authors indicated that their work does not fall within the field of housing and that, therefore, they did not consider themselves suitable respondents.[6] After discounting them, 41 usable completed questionnaires remained, providing the basis for the findings presented below. Collectively, these respondents are (co)authors of between 54% and 80% of all *JHBE* articles published from 1996 to 1999, and a higher percentage of those articles specifically on housing.[7]

## 4. The respondents

### 4.1. *Characteristics*

A large majority of the respondents have an academic affiliation (83%), while the rest are evenly distributed across the private, public, and non-profit sectors. More than half (56%) occupy a senior rank; more than one-third (37%) report holding a mid-level position. This indicates that the respond-ents have had considerable professional experience and ample opportunity to assess the use of their work. As to national background, the Netherlands dominates (37%), followed by Britain (15%) and the USA (12%). Other

*Table 2.* Source of funding*

| | |
|---|---|
| University | 66% |
| National government | 61 |
| Foundation | 44 |
| Local government | 39 |
| International agency | 32 |
| Other | 29 |

*Respondents (N = 41) could indicate multiple funding sources.

countries of origin include Belgium and France (5% each), and Denmark, Hungary, Israel, Russia, and Sweden (3% each); 16% of the respondents did not list a national background.[8] Respondents have trained in a range of disciplines. Most frequently mentioned are planning (29%) and urban or human geography (24%), followed by economics (17%) and other social sciences (17%). There also is lesser representation from demography (14%) and the design professions (7%).

## 4.2. Professional activities

Respondents report great variation in the foci of their research, which spans a broad spectrum from the local to the international level, from economics and political science to geography and history, and from residential satisfaction to rental subsidy policies. In contrast to the wide range of substantive research foci, there is much more commonality among the respondents concerning the primary goal of their professional activities, which many state in terms of "policy research" (43%). The next most frequently mentioned professional objective is contributing to "the development of theory" (18%), often in relation to the functioning of housing markets. Smaller numbers of researchers indicate other aims, such as applied research, teaching, publication, and methodological advances.

The primacy of policy research is not surprising given the relative importance of the various types of research sponsors. Those who pay the piper are bound to figure importantly in setting the direction of research. Financial support comes foremost from universities and national government agencies. The former have funded the work of 66% of the respondents, while 61% list the latter.[9] Other significant funding sources include foundations (44%), local government (39%), and international agencies (32%) – see Table 2.

The audiences that the respondents list as being relevant to their work naturally reflect the hierarchy of funding sources. National policymakers are the chief audience for the researchers who participated in this study (93%).

*Table 3.* Audiences for respondents' work*

| | |
|---|---|
| National policymakers | 93% |
| Academic colleagues | 90 |
| Students | 68 |
| Local policymakers | 68 |
| Housing professionals/practitioners | 68 |
| Other | 12 |

*Percentage totals more than 100% because many respondents indicated more than one audience (N = 41).

*Table 4.* Venues for respondents' involvement in housing-related activities*

| | |
|---|---|
| Professional publications | 93% |
| National policymaking | 54 |
| Consulting | 49 |
| Professional practice | 46 |
| Popular media | 44 |
| Activist group | 15 |
| Other | 19 |

*Percentage totals more than 100% because many respondents indicated more than one type of venue for involvement in housing-related activities.

Important as well are academic peers (90%). A majority of respondents also list local policymakers, housing professionals, and students as relevant audiences. Many respondents identify multiple audiences for their work (see Table 3).

Finally, respondents also specified the venues for their professional involvements. In view of the high proportion of academic researchers among the respondents, it was expected that professional publications would be important (mentioned by 93%). Others list arenas for national policymaking (54%), consulting (49%), professional practice (49%), and popular media (44%). A small minority refers to activist groups (15%) or other settings (see Table 4).

From these results, it appears that there is a great deal of consistency between the chief funding sources, the primary audiences, and the main venues for the work of housing researchers. However, the data do not allow conclusions about the causality of the implied relationships. That is, there is insufficient information for firm conclusions concerning the extent and the ways that policy priorities set research agendas or, alternatively, that research

compels attention to policy concerns and helps shape priorities for funding. These questions merit further, more in-depth study.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1. *Perceived implications*

Respondents were asked to describe one or more implications of their work for how we practice or study housing. About 25% do not report any such implications, providing such answers as "I wouldn't know of anything concrete," "This is hard to say for academic work," "Unclear. I don't know if my work influences policy in a direct way." Others think of themselves as critics with indirect influences: "helping set the agenda for public discourse," "contributing to academic and theoretical debates," "questioning the role of the state," "exposing effects of privatization," "developing material for education," "enhancing public awareness," and creating "intellectual tools for analysis" or "decision supports" for housing policy. The common theme underlying these answers is a sense among these respondents that the implications of their work are often intangible and difficult to operationalize, and, further, that insofar as they occur such effects may make themselves felt only in the longer term.

Most respondents, however, perceive their work as having more specific consequences. Often, its significance is seen to lie in its implications for the formulation or evaluation of policy measures. Answers refer to, for example, changes in property taxation to bring about greater tenure equity, the development of new mortgage and housing finance instruments, the revision of urban renewal programs, and the drafting of legislation for rental subsidies. Many respondents also note that their work has produced insights that assist our understanding of the functioning of housing markets, land markets, and job markets. Housing management gets frequent mention as well by researchers who cite recommendations for approaches that are socially responsive and fiscally sound. Others mention educational and organizational contributions (e.g., starting a new degree program; creating adult education classes; informing the public through mass media; developing a formal professional network). In addition, several researchers refer to the significance of their work in terms of analysis of consumer preferences, demographic projections, and the development of indicators. In short, a majority of the respondents have no difficulty in identifying practical implications of their work. They perceive their research as being useful for housing practitioners and policymakers.

## 5.2. Ineffective use

Although most researchers state that their work has implications for housing practice and policy, many are less sanguine concerning the actual utilization of their contributions. In other words, many respondents see themselves doing useful research, but they do not see practitioners and policymakers as drawing on it effectively. When asked about barriers to more effective use of their work and recommended changes to bring about improvement, respondents diverge in their answers. A few researchers point to the lack of adequate data and the need for more studies that offer repeated empirical evidence concerning particular policy questions. According to them, researchers need to conduct more studies in accordance with rigorous standards of social science research. Better and more studies are expected to translate into more effective use of research. They also stress the need for longitudinal research in order to assess policy impacts and the importance of fine-grained studies at the local level. These respondents tend to fault researchers themselves for the widespread disregard of their work. They are critical of the practice of research and believe that research will carry more weight among decision-makers if researchers set higher standards and raise the level of their performance.

More often, however, respondents identify deficient communication between researchers and practitioners as a barrier to effective use of research. When making recommendations to bring about improvement, these respondents refer to the needs for writing shorter pieces, avoiding jargon, using media other than academic outlets, briefings for civil servants, and establishing a practice-oriented journal. In a related vein, others remark that there is a need for more opportunities where researchers and policymakers can meet and develop joint networks. They suggest that the adoption of researchers' recommendations requires trust by decision-makers. Improved communication is seen as resulting in greater trust. Solid research is often complex and difficult to understand; better communication would lead to better understanding, which, in turn, would create greater trust of researchers and more effective use of their work. The answers of several respondents also point to the importance of institutional contexts. For example, some describe how their research was effective in procedures of parliamentary inquiry or in the operations of an independent governmental advisory council.

In contrast to these rather benevolent views, others bluntly state that practitioners and policymakers lack a professional attitude towards becoming or remaining informed about issues. They "go to different meetings, organized for entertainment and revenue-producing functions rather than continuing education." They do not subscribe to or regularly read professional journals and do not have a habit of staying abreast of developments in the field. They make little effort to ascertain if current policies still fit changing conditions.

As an example, one respondent observes continued support for new construction in a local housing market when recent building had eliminated past shortages and produced a surplus.[10]

Some state that practitioners and policymakers do not sufficiently appreciate the importance of repeated testing and developing generalizable conclusions, or that they simply tend not to read relevant material that is readily available. These shortcomings are often attributed to two factors: time (not enough) and politics (too much). Policymakers often lack personal time owing to work overload and a demanding schedule. In addition, many respondents cite the time lag between research and policymaking: "Decision-makers need information now and researchers cannot provide it until later." Researchers widen this gap if they present their findings only in academic publications, because these often involve a lengthy process of review, revision, and queuing before something appears in print.

Others, yet, mention academic norms and the current incentive culture at universities as constraints on the effectiveness of researchers. They note that in decisions about tenure, promotion, and salary raises, the criteria typically reward work that earns the respect of academic peers – in particular, publication of generalizable results in refereed journals. Several respondents report that they are looked down upon because their work is more strongly oriented toward direct application to real-world issues.

More problematic to some is that those who commission research often also are the ones who control its dissemination and application. The undue reliance of many researchers on their funding sources identifies them with the status quo and the powers that decide, leaving them with insufficient independence to play meaningful roles.[11] In this connection, a few respondents stress the importance of communicating with the public to mobilize support for actions that are opposed by those in decision-making positions. There is also the problem of lack of funding to implement recommended policies when those policies compete for resources with other policies that are being given higher priority in the political arena.

## 6. Discussion

It is safe to say that the results of this study reflect the experiences and views of those housing researchers who published in *JHBE* from 1996 through 1999. It is possible that the author profile of the journal has since changed. However, it is unlikely that any such changes during the last two years would result in responses drastically at variance with those obtained here. It is hard to speculate about differences between this group of housing researchers and housing researchers who published in other journals during

this period, such as *Housing Studies* or *Scandinavian Housing and Planning Research*. These groups clearly overlap and certain similarities are probable. The findings of this study do not show clear-cut national differences in the responses. However, further research specifically probing such differences may reveal types of relationships between researchers and practitioners that vary more distinctly country-by-country owing to different national contexts and traditions. Such differences were not a focus here, and, in light of the preponderance of researchers from Western and Northern Europe among the respondents of this study, caution is necessary when extending discussion of the findings reported here to countries in other regions of the world with different political economies, legislative contexts, research wherewithal, and so forth. Better insights in this regard will require a follow-up study, with a larger number of respondents and targeted to be purposely inclusive of Eastern Europe, the US, Canada, Australia, Japan, as well as countries in the developing world.

The research presented here is best seen as exploratory, raising questions that seem relevant to gaining a better understanding of the use and usability of housing research and, ultimately, to improving housing practices. These questions help bring into focus several broader issues related to the formulation and implementation of more effective housing policies and practices, some of which are beyond the purview of researchers. However, becoming better informed about what hinders and what promotes successful research applications can be a step towards realizing necessary, albeit insufficient, conditions for progress. The rest of this discussion identifies several points related to the findings presented here when seen in the context of the wider literature on research utilization.

## 6.1. *The perspective of policymakers and practitioners*

Among the many factors that influence whether and how research is used, several relate to the policymakers and practitioners that are often the recipients of research, either by contract or by intent. A study of library-information research in Britain found that deterrents to reading research reports included: being too busy (38%), no access (38%), irrelevance (35%), and unaware of existence (24%) (Slater, 1983). Caution is in order when considering these findings, obtained some 20 years ago in a different field. For example, the meteoric rise of the Internet has greatly facilitated access to a vastly larger amount of information (e.g., Tanenbaum and Mochmann, 1994; Card, 2000). In environmental design, a field more closely related to housing, the use and usability of knowledge has been a longstanding concern (Kantrowitz, 1985; Reizenstein, 1975; Saarinen, 1995; Seidel, 1984; Studer, 1988), precipitating the emergence of new, multidisciplinary organizations, degree programs,

and journals (Van Vliet--, 1987). These developments have not brought the positive outcomes many had predicted or hoped for. Critics have attributed this lack of success to a variety of factors, including ineffective presentation formats, incompatible value orientations and time horizons of designers and researchers, and conflicting epistemological frameworks (Reizenstein, 1980; Studer, 1990). There has been little consideration, however, of how the wider political economy impinges on the use of design and housing research.

## 6.2. *The political and economic context of implementation of research recommendations*

In the shadow of Nazi totalitarianism and under the demand for applied research arising from the need for solutions to urgent problems during the Depression era, Robert Lynd wrote the classic *Knowledge for What?* in which he observed that "the social scientist finds himself caught between the rival demands of straight, incisive and, if need be, radically divergent thinking, and the growingly insistent demand that his thinking shall not be subversive" (Lynd, 1939, p. 7).

Since then, this dilemma has intensified, as researchers are becoming more enmeshed with the wider economic and political context within which they carry out their work. This trend is not only apparent in their growing dependence on funding to undertake research in the first place, but also in the proprietary nature of data that are collected, and restrictions imposed on the dissemination of findings, once studies have been completed.[12] Such restrictions are no longer exclusive to the physical and medical sciences, but occur in the field of housing as well. For example, researchers in Britain and the U.S. report having been refused permission by sponsors to present their work at professional meetings. There also exist many examples of how research reports have been selectively edited by funding sources to support prevailing policy positions, rather than what the researchers consider to be accurate representations of their findings. This development underscores the importance of political astuteness among researchers, a point not unrelated to the following observation.

## 6.3. *Few researchers are activists*

A strikingly small number of respondents report involvement with activist groups (see Table 4). This is likely related to their singular orientation to questions of policy, which they see primarily linked to the official realm of government, particularly at the national level. In light of this focus, it is not surprising that many respondents express frustration at the lack of adequate response to their work: They may simply be insufficiently attentive

to important spheres of policy implementation, notably the non-profit sector and community-based organizations. This lack of engagement diminishes the effectiveness of research findings in policy debates when competing perspectives are represented by more ardent advocates (Grodsky, 1982).

### 6.4. Working in partnerships

To be sure, there are many researchers who deliberately choose to work in partnership with neighborhood groups and nongovernmental organizations in community outreach. However, not much of this work is disseminated in peer-reviewed, academic publications. There exists, nonetheless, a significant literature in this area, for example, on university-community partnerships and service-learning projects (e.g., Forsyth et al., 2000; Kleniewski, 1999; Wiewel et al., 1996).[13] In 1994, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development established the Office of University Partnerships (OUP) to encourage and support cooperation between institutions of higher education and low-income communities through grant programs, interactive conferences, and a clearinghouse for the dissemination of information. Its goals are:

● To recognize, reward, and build upon successful examples of universities' activities in local revitalization projects;

● To create the next generation of urban scholars and encourage them to focus their work on housing and community development policy; and

● To create partnerships with other Federal Agencies to support innovative teaching, research, and service partnerships.[14]

By 2001, OUP had allocated more than $64 million to more than 143 such partnerships.[15] Good examples are found at University of Illinois at Chicago (Mayfield et al., 1999; Wiewel and Lieber, 1998) and University of Pennsylvania (Benson et al., 2000). Similar programs exist in other countries. In addition, there are many local initiatives along these lines.

### 6.5. Best practices

Worldwide, the literature on so-called "best practices" is growing fast. Often compiled into searchable databases, this material describes effective (typically local) programs and projects so that organizations and governments that share common problems can learn from each other about what works and what does not work. The UN City Summit held in 1996 in Istanbul (Habitat II) stressed the importance of documenting and learning from good practices. The database that was subsequently established now contains more than 1100 cases, categorized by subject, region, and scale.[16] There now exist a number of similar databases. Since there are important assumptions and limitations

associated with attempts at knowledge transfer (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996), there is a useful role for comparative research in identifying the contingent conditions for successful lesson drawing.

## 7. Conclusion

There are many studies that evaluate policy impacts. In contrast, there are few studies that assess the impacts of research on policy.[17] Such effects are difficult to isolate from other influences that inform and shape policy designs and decisions. However, insofar as research does affect policy and practice in measurable ways, it is not clear that the direction and significance of such impacts are congruent with researchers' personal assessments. This raises several questions.

The survey results reported in this paper relate to respondents' subjective perceptions of the implications of their work. These perceptions may or may not bear a relationship to actual impacts, which may occur even though none is perceived or which may not occur in spite of perceptions to the contrary. Thus, we have no insights into the ways and the extent that subjective perceptions match objective realities. Further, while researchers appear to be confident that research impacts are inherently good, it behooves to question this assumption. Research may have unintended (side) effects that are, in fact, negative. It would be very instructive to examine not only how research has contributed in positive ways to housing policies and practices, but also how research has failed to live up to expectations. Just as the dog's not barking in the night provided Sherlock Holmes with a clue about the murderer's identity, so also the absence of research results can be revealing. Moreover, in other situations, research-based recommendations may have contributed to detrimental outcomes. Hence, we need to study both successes and failures. In this regard, further research needs to include housing policymakers and practitioners. What do they see as examples of useful research contributions? Which are examples of research coming up short? What do they see as impediments to more effective research applications? Which changes do they think are necessary? Writing about lessons from welfare reform in the U.S., Schneider (1999) stresses the dialectic between research and policy, which she places in a broader national and global framework. Future housing research will benefit from a similar embedding of these reciprocal influences in the wider political economy context.

## Acknowledgements

## Notes

[1] *Housing and Society* (1978), *Housing Finance Research* (1982), *Housing Studies* (1986), *Housing Finance International* (1986), *Scandinavian Housing and Planning Research* (1984; relaunched as *Housing Theory and Society* in 1999), *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* (1989), *Journal of Housing and Community Development* (continuation in 1995 of *Journal of Housing*), *Journal of Housing Economics* (1991), *Journal of Affordable Housing and Community Development* Law (1991), and *European Journal of Housing Policy* (2001). These periodical publications focus specifically on housing. During this period as well, a number of new journals have been established that are more broadly oriented to urban issues and environment-behavior relationships, but often including aspects of housing.

[2] See, for example, two recent special issues of this journal: *"Putting Comparative Research into Practice"* 2000, vol. 15, no. 1; and *"The Methodological Challenge to Comparative Research"* 2001, vol. 16, no. 1.

[3] The disciplinary labels apply to *paradigms* rather than individuals. Researchers may have trained formally in a certain discipline but conduct studies that draw on conceptualizations or methods originating from or dominant in another discipline. A defining characteristic of a *discipline* is that it concerns itself with a diverse array of topics from a delimited paradigm that helps specify the questions asked and that guides research design, choice of data collection methods, and explanatory theory. In contrast, a *field of studies* comprises a fairly clearly delineated subject matter (e.g., housing) but draws on the contributions from a wide range of disciplines.

[4] Questionnaires were sent to all authors of articles in volumes 11 through 14, no. 2. During this period, the journal's title was *Netherlands Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*. The current title was first adopted in volume 15, number 1, to reflect better the international coverage and readership.

[5] The questionnaire included a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions and is available from the author upon request.

[6] For example, articles with peripheral relevance to housing, at best, concerned themselves with such topics as transportation, spatial planning, social capital, office location choices, and the geography of work and leisure. Non-respondents appeared to include predominantly authors whose work seemed of little if any direct significance to housing.

[7] Some respondents were the author of more than one article. Since 10 respondents chose to remain anonymous, it is not possible to be precise about the percentage of articles, published in *JHBE* during this three-year period, produced by the participants in this study. However, the percentage range given here is conservative for articles focused on housing because the articles whose authors may not be among the respondents tend to be only tangentially concerned with housing. Responses were processed and analyzed with the help of N-Vivo, a software program for qualitative analysis (for a discussion, see Richards and Richards, 1998).

[8] The large representation of the Netherlands and Britain among the respondents in this study appears to be a more general characteristic of housing researchers and housing research. For example, in 1999, the largest shares of the membership of the European Network for Housing

Research were from Britain (35%) and The Netherlands (19%). There is a similar finding from an analysis of all housing research published from 1994 through 1998 in *Housing Studies, Netherlands Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, and *Scandinavian Housing and Planning Research*. The two countries most often included in such studies are Britain (37%) and The Netherlands (18%). See "Affordable Housing and Urban Redevelopment: Searching for Models," translated into Spanish and published as a chapter (pp. 205–232) in *Problemas de acceso al mercado de la vivienda en la Union Europea* edited by Aurora Pedro and Alberto Sanchis Cuesta, University of Valencia Press (2000). Tables available from the author upon request.

[9] Respondents could list more than one sponsor; see Table 2. The frequent mention of universities as a source of funding for policy research may be explained by the common provision of small grants for "secondary analysis" that does not require expensive collection of original data and by the bias of university norms that favor publishable and more generalizable research over applied studies of a local nature, which are less likely to enhance the stature and visibility of the institution.

[10] Another respondent offers this identical situation as an example of decision-makers catering to economic interests favoring new construction, rather than an instance of their being uninformed about changes in market conditions.

[11] In this regard, there is a telling comment by a self-described "pensioner" among the respondents who reports having become able to express independent views only after retirement.

[12] For good recent coverage of this and related issues, see the four-part series by Eyal Press and Jennifer Washburn in the March 2000 issue of *The Atlantic*: Pt. 1, The Kept University; Pt. 2, Secrecy and Science; Pt., 3, The University as Business; and Pt. 4, Downsizing the Humanities; also available from the web at http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/2000/03/. See also Per Pinstrup-Andersen (2000). "Is research a global public good?" *Entwicklung + Ländlicher Raum*, 34 Jahrgang, Heft 2.

[13] See also two special issues of *American Behavioral Scientist*, February 1999: 42(5) and February 2000: 43(5).

[14] See http://www.oup.org/about/about.html New practices are periodically added and the UN Human Settlements Programme provides assistance to increase the utility of the data base.

[15] Barbara Holland, Director, Office of University Partnerships, HUD; personal communication, March 4, 2002.

[16] See www.bestpractices.org.

[17] Data from the *JHBE* survey, reported here, are insufficient for classifying research implications into different types or categories. However, developing a homeowner education workshop is clearly not in the same class as drafting a rental assistance program. Likewise, some implications remain restricted to local housing markets, whereas others concern national policy. An empirically grounded conceptualization of the different tiers and types of research implications should guide further research in its selection of the data sources and methods appropriate to particular issues.

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