between production and SOCIAL REPRODUCTION at its heart. This understanding provides a corrective for the common assumption that the household is a 'natural' unit; a perspective that allows it to be disregarded in economic analyses, its substantial contributions to local and national ECONOMIES ignored or taken for granted. But without the domestic labour provided in and through the household, 'there would be no labour force and no SOCIETY' (Townsend and Momsen 1987). Not only is the household at the nexus of social reproduction, which encompasses biological reproduction – if not generational, then that associated with daily sustenance – cultural reproduction, and CONSUMPTION, but it is also the site of economic production, including both paid and unremunerated work. The balance between these activities – as much as who carries them out and for whom – is a social question. While household members manage, maintain, perpetuate, contest and sometimes change these arrangements and the social relations that hold them in place, they do so in a particular historical and geographical context.

Prior to the interventions of feminist theorists beginning in the late 1970s (see FEMINISM), the household was assumed to include affectively related individuals with largely homogenous interests, and altruistic and co-operative intentions towards each other (e.g. Folbre, 1986), but as Townsend and Momsen (1987) long ago cautioned, the household can be an 'arena of subordination'. It is a realm of differentiated and unequal social relations, structured by age, CLASS, ETHNICITY, GENDER, LIFE COURSE, nationality, RACE and SEXUALITY (e.g. Brydon and Chant, 1989). These internal divisions, which are associated with particular and shifting DIVISIONS OF LABOUR and allocations of RESOURCES, are constituted by – as they are constitutive of – broader social relations of production and reproduction. Household composition; location (whether matrilocal, patrilocal or neither); POWER dynamics, such as who heads the household and under what terms implicit or explicit; and the allocation of work and consumption practices among members are effects of this interrelationship. These differences are historically and geographically contingent. If capitalist INDUSTRIALIZATION has been associated with the separation of HOME and work, and households of individuals or nuclear families tend to predominate in the global NORTH, while extended family households are more common in the global SOUTH, it is important to remember that these differences themselves vary according to class, race, ethnicity, sexuality and location, among other things. CK

Suggested reading

Marston (2000); Walton-Roberts and Pratt (2005).

housing class A social group defined by its housing tenure (Rex and Moore, 1967). It suggests that tenure status shapes the material conditions of life. Rex developed a categorization of housing classes – including owners, tenants in publicly or privately owned housing, and lodgers in another household's dwelling, among others – which permitted analysis of the experiences of immigrant groups in the UK and emphasized the role of URBAN MANAGERS AND GATEKEEPERS in constraining housing market choice (see HOUSING STUDIES). Those interested in urban politics have also debated the concept, since it suggests that housing CLASS interests might be the basis for collective political action (Purcell, 2001). EM

Suggested reading

Rex and Moore (1967).

housing studies An interdisciplinary field with a wide array of research foci, dealing with aspects of housing from PROPERTY MARKET dynamics, through the provision and management of special needs accommodation, to questions of design and SUSTAINABILITY, among others. Geographical approaches to housing have frequently addressed the uneven geographies of housing production, consumption, meaning and policy. These uneven geographies reflect and produce differences in housing within cities, across countries, and between more- and less-developed countries.

One focus is the provision of housing via various mechanisms (Ball, Harloe and Martens, 1988). The production process leads to the spatial SEGREGATION of certain types of housing and therefore, certain people in specific NEIGHBOURHOODS – a process that is frequently inflected with RACISM. The nature of provision, tenure type, the cost of housing, and its quality and maintenance all vary in ways that impact its character not only as a shelter but also as a symbolic element of the LANDSCAPE (e.g. Bunnell, 2002), as an investment and as a RESOURCE that shapes residents' life chances.

For those with high incomes who can buy into neighbourhoods where the housing stock is appreciating, home ownership presents opportunities for CAPITAL gain. These

opportunities are, in many countries (e.g. the USA), supported by state policies that provide subsidies and tax benefits for homeowners or that, more generally, mitigate the negative impacts of other land uses on higher-income residential neighbourhoods (cf. URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING; ZONING). Low-income owners, on the other hand, frequently face discrimination based on income, race and other factors (cf. REDLINING; URBAN MANAGERS AND GATEKEEPERS) and are often penalized financially as risky investments. Furthermore, they frequently face instability in their neighbourhoods as a result, for instance, of GENTRIFICATION and URBAN RENEWAL. These conditions enforce and deepen existing patterns of social polarization.

Similarly, while housing – no matter what the tenure type – is a resource that aids in access to jobs and various types of services from shops to recreational facilities, it is a socially and spatially uneven resource. For example, high-quality food at reasonable prices is often difficult to find near low-income housing, as are high-quality, safe recreational facilities for CHILDREN. These factors, among others, both reflect and reinforce inequalities relating to nutrition and health and are, in turn, directly related to housing (Smith and Mallinson, 1997).

The social, economic and geographical characteristics of housing production and CONSUMPTION are closely related to PUBLIC POLICY. In different countries and at different times, policy-makers see housing as a tool for and/or an object of policy intervention. Housing construction has been used to kick-start economies (cf. SUBURBANIZATION) and to reshape INNER CITIES (cf. URBAN RENEWAL). It has also been central to attempts by states, charities and other organizations to improve social conditions such as health. The STATE's decreasing role in public housing provision raises new challenges in this regard, but has been paralleled by growth in alternative forms of housing tenure associated with community development (DeFilippis, 2004) and in attempts to reduce the impact of housing development on the environment. EM

Suggested reading

Ball, Harloe and Martens (1988).

human agency The ability of people to act, usually regarded as emerging from consciously held intentions, and as resulting in observable effects in the human world. Questions about whether individuals have the freedom to act or whether their actions are constrained, or even determined, by structural forces have been at the heart of many debates in contemporary HUMAN GEOGRAPHY.

At the turn of the twentieth century, individuals' actions were viewed by geographers as being the result of a higher logic or force, whether the imperatives of ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINISM or the conditioning of Sauer's (1925) 'superorganic' notion of CULTURE. There were exceptions such as Vidal de la Blache's (1926) POSSIBILISM, which allowed a range of possible actions to emerge from any situation, but for most the role of the individual was secondary to process.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the introduction of SPATIAL SCIENCE allowed a DECISION-MAKING agent, but only in as far as it followed the logic of NEO-CLASSICAL ECONOMIC modelling. The adoption in geography of structural versions of MARXISM also regarded individual motivations and interpretations as necessarily secondary to the determinants of the structures of HISTORICAL MATERIALISM. HUMANISTIC GEOGRAPHY emerged in the 1970s with the stated goal of reanimating geography, to put people and their thoughts, emotions and beliefs at the heart of the discipline. It offered a challenge to structural Marxism, which humanistic geographers felt offered 'a passive model of man [sic] that is conservative and results in an obfuscation of the process by which human beings can and do change the world' (Duncan and Ley, 1982, p. 54). Focusing on issues such as dwelling, LIFEWORLD and rhythms, humanistic geographers believed that social life was constructed through human actions. For them, structure appeared due to reification, and seemed 'autonomous only because it is anonymous' (Duncan, 1980). While there were attempts by some humanistic geographers to recognise the limitations of human agency – such as Ley's (1983) focus on intersubjectivity – most tended towards epistemological IDEALISM. This led to the criticism that humanistic geography was naïve about the limitations put on individual ability to act.

STRUCTURATION THEORY and REALISM sought to explain how social structures were both outcome and medium of the agency that constitutes them. Giddens' (1984) structuration theory avoids the extremes of arguing that society is comprised of individual acts or is determined by social forces by holding these two extremes in tension with one another. It is through repetition that the acts of individual agents reproduce social structures such as institutions, moral codes, norms and conventions.