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# Re-specification of Concepts in the Morphogenetic Approach for Property Market Research

**Fatih Eren\***

## **Abstract**

The Morphogenetic Approach (MA) was developed to explain social structural change processes by sociologist Margaret Archer in 1995. MA became a remarkable and much-debated approach shortly in social sciences because of its unique consideration about structure and agency dualism. Although MA has been discussed intensively in the science world, its appropriateness to real world situations has slightly been questioned by scholars and it has been applied very few to social fields other than education. Starting from this gap, this study aims to introduce MA to property researchers and turn it into a practical methodological tool which may easily be used to explain any social change process in urban and property studies. The study attempts to test the suitability of this methodological tool for property market studies as an alternative social field and seeks the answer of this basic question: "Can we explain the change process of a property market with the help of concepts and methodological framework in MA?". An in-depth and comparative literature review method has been used in this

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\*PhD. Selcuk University Faculty of Architecture  
Department of City and Regional Planning, Konya,  
Turkey, E-mail: feren2000@gmail.com

methodology-focused research. The research reveals that despite some of its weaknesses, MA is a useful methodological tool which may be used in explaining the change process of a local property market. The study also makes some important theoretical contributions to the structure and agency dualism.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Understanding the social dimension of property market activities depends on the transfer of different perspectives and innovative research methodologies from social sciences to the property field. This study attempts to adapt the Morphogenetic Approach (MA) whose theoretical and methodological foundation is very strong to property market research. MA's sophisticated concepts and complex methodological framework has been simplified; the simplified methodology has then reconstructed for the explanation of the change process in a local property market in this research. Each concept in MA has been re-specified from the perspective of property markets to explore the strengths and weaknesses of MA in a real world practice. The study brings a new methodological tool in the property literature.

The paper consists of five sections. Section 1 provides general information about the paper. Section 2 makes a comprehensive review of MA; after the introduction of MA, MA's concepts, which are used to explore social change processes, are defined and explained. This section also mentions debates on MA. Section 3 considers how MA's concepts are re-specified for property market research. Section 4 is the discussion section which explores the strengths and weaknesses of MA, which have been revealed during the re-specification. The suitability of MA for property market research is questioned in this section. The final section concludes the success of MA as a methodological tool in the explanation of a social structural change in a property market.

## **REVIEW OF THE MORPHOGENETIC APPROACH**

MA was developed by sociologist Margaret Archer, who is one of the pioneers of the Critical Realism (CR) movement, in 1995. Archer was the first person to apply CR in a sociological field (education). Thus, Archer has opened the way for CR to be applied to different study areas in social sciences. MA tries to explain how a structural change process runs in a society, so it can be applied to all kinds of social processes. The explanation of different social change processes through MA may provide an opportunity for social scientists to make a comparison between varied structural change processes.



### **Basis of MA**

MA is an approach which uses the 'structure and agency dualism'. Archer tries to analyse the structure and agency dualism from an open critical-realist perspective at the pre-development stage of MA. According to MA, agents have some influential and transformative powers over structures; and structures also have some influential and transformative powers over agents. MA is distinguished from 'individualist' and 'structuralist' approaches by its perspective.

In the individualist approach, social reality comes into existence entirely as a result of individuals and their activities. Structures remain passive, so they are perceived as fixed variables. However, individuals are perceived as independent variables, so individuals have one-way causal effects on structures, from bottom to top. In the structuralist (holist) approach, individuals are seen as inert agents who are deprived of the power of moving and behaving independently. Individuals are perceived as fixed variables, so structures have simple one-way causal effects on individuals, from top to bottom. Archer carries this known structure and agency dualism a step further and states that 'structure' and 'agency' may be separated from each other in a society. In line with this, Archer adds a new conflation at the centre of this dualism. With the help of this central conflation, first, 'structure' and 'agency' are separated from each other in the general operation of this dualism. Next, the issue of how downward confluations and upward confluations occur is explored using some conceptual tools in this interim stage of structure/agency dualism (M. Archer, 1995).

### **Analytical Dualism**

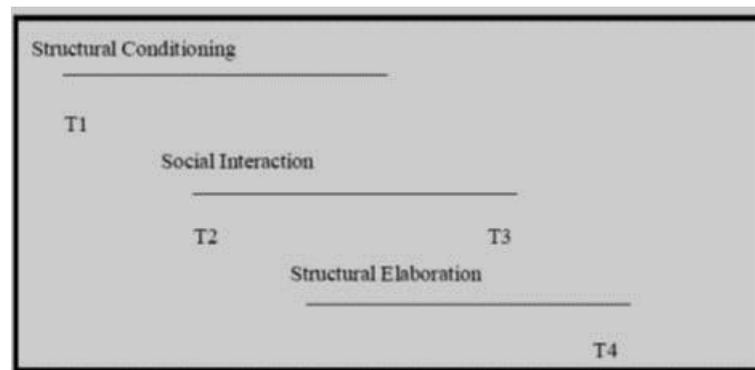
MA is founded on the concepts of analytical dualism; so, firstly, MA tries to understand what analytical dualism is. 'Structure' and 'agency' are found at two opposite sides of this analytical dualism. With the help of this dualism, the issue of why matters are so and not otherwise is open to examination (M. Archer, 1995). This perspective is the basic way of thinking of Critical Realists. Archer asserts that 'structure' and 'agency' must be separated from each other in a structure and agency dualism. 'Structures' may be identified independently from 'agents' through this separation and the causal effect of identified structures on agents may be researched in this way. At the same time, contingent relations and results which emerge as a result of upward/downward relations are explained in this dualism (Lockwood, 1964). Downward and upward relations between structures and agents may be understood through the separation

of structure and agency. The problem of reduction of one side to the other is removed through this approach. Archer explains the matter of the separation of structure and agency with 'link rather than sink' words. In a sense, she rejects the structure and agency duality and adopts another structure and agency duality. In parallel to Archer, Lockwood (1964) states that the separation of structure and agency is not possible analytically, but can be achieved when the time factor is included in this understanding (Lockwood, 1964).

Archer settles time at the centre of MA, drawing inspiration from Lockwood. Time is incorporated as sequential tracks and phases rather than simply a medium through which events take place in MA. In this way, structure and agency can operate in different time periods as separate from each other. This operation must be based on this basic principle: 'Structures are formations which emerge before the beginning of agent actions. Existing structures have an impact on the transformation of agent actions. Therefore, transformed agent actions may change the existing structures' (M. Archer, 1995). MA explains social changes dividing them into 3 parts (see Figure 1):

- a. Structural Conditioning
- b. Social Interaction
- c. Structural Elaboration

These 3 parts refer to the three stages of the 'morphogenetic cycle'. These 3 stages are explained briefly one-by-one below.



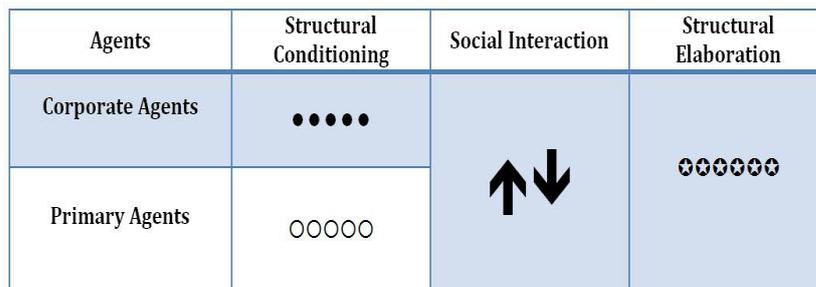
**Figure 1.** Morphogenesis of structure

"Structural conditioning" is about the outcomes of systemic actions which happened in the past. Institutions are 'refined structures' which are established by previous agents. One of the basic philosophies of MA is this: 'Previous agential interactions and past social events have causal effects on today's agential interactions and social events' (M. Archer, 1995) (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Situational logics in MA and their outcomes in the morphogenetic cycle ((M. Archer, 1995) illustrated by the author)

Agents	Followed Situational Logics	Result	Final Products (SEPs)
<b>Primary Agents &amp; Corporate Agents</b>	Protection Correction	Stasis (No change)	The continuation of existing roles and institutions in the social system in the same way
	Elimination Opportunism	Genesis (Change)	The emergence of new roles and institutions in the social system

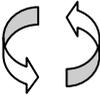
“Social interactions” occur under structural conditions, but are not specified by structural conditions. In other words, social interactions are ‘emergent’. Structural conditions provide some advantages to some agents and provide some disadvantages to other agents. In other words, structural conditioning is interpreted by different agents in different ways. For this reason, agents generate different behavioural models under the same structural conditionings. Rewarded agents who benefit from structural conditionings try to sustain these conditionings, whilst agents who suffer detriment from structural conditionings try to change them. Structural conditionings do not force agents to do something; they just condition agents. Agents pay some costs if they do not take structural conditioning into consideration; but conditioning is not wholly determinist (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Structural change as a result of interactions between primary and corporate agents in MA

“Social elaboration” is the final stage of the morphogenetic cycle. At this stage, previous structures undergo a modification and new structures emerge as the combined results of actions of different social interest groups. New emergent structures cannot be predicted in advance; nor can they be designed. The morphogenetic cycle is then completed after the emergence of new structures; but a new morphogenetic cycle starts immediately. These cycles always go on in the same way (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Mechanisms of the bargaining power and the negotiating strength and their outcomes in MA ((M. Archer, 1995); illustrated by the author)

Agents	Mechanisms	The integration of agents' interests	Result
<b>Primary agents</b>  <b>Corporate agents</b>	Bargaining Power & Negotiating strength (based on resources)	No	Stasis (No change)
		Yes	Genesis (change)

There are four basic propositions of the Morphogenetic Analysis (M. Archer, 1995):

- There are internally and externally necessary relations within and between social structures,
- Causal influences are exerted by social structure(s) on social interaction,
- There are causal relationships between groups and individuals at the level of social interaction, and
- Social interaction elaborates upon the composition of social structure(s) (by modifying current internal and necessary relationships and introducing new ones where morphogenesis is concerned).

The first proposition is a kind of authorisation for the analytical dualism. There are some structures which are created as a result of past social interactions and past events. These structures exist as separate entities which are independent of present agents. The second, the third and the fourth propositions refer to the three stages of the morphogenetic cycle. The structuralist view only accepts the second proposition whilst the individualist view only accepts the third proposition. However, 'Structuration Theorists' or 'Central Conflationists' only accept the fourth proposition; namely, they do not see the second and the third propositions as separate assertions so they miss these points. The fourth proposition is about the capacity of agents to transform structures. With the help of these four propositions, MA brings a much more sensitive explanation to the structure and agency dualism. In order to understand MA better, it is necessary to explain the concept of 'emergent property' first because critical realists emphasize 'emergence' as the basic point of their approach.



MA accepts that there are two different types of 'emergent property' (M. Archer, 1995). The first type is 'Structural Emergent Properties' (SEPs). SEPs are emergent properties which differ according to physical and human resources. Roles, institutions and systems can be considered in the context of SEPs. Every SEP emerges as a consequence of a previous material morphogenetic cycle. In short, every SEP is the outcome of social interactions which have been experienced in the past; every SEP is also a structural entity which will have an influence on future social interactions. A morphogenetic cycle starts with the first SEP. Every SEP then conditions social interactions which follow the first SEP. Social interactions and social changes produce new SEPs. The emergence of new SEPs means the beginning of new morphogenetic cycles. These cycles always follow one another so every SEP retains some patterns of the previous SEPs. The second type of 'emergent property' is 'Cultural Emergent Properties' (CEPs). CEPs are analytically similar to the SEPs. CEPs are related to essential ideational relations between social structures whilst SEPs are related to material relations; so from this point of view CEPs differ from SEPs. Theories, beliefs and ideas can be considered in the context of CEPs. Every CEP is an outcome of the previous cultural conditionings and socio-cultural interactions. In other words, every CEP is a cultural outcome (emergent) of previous cultural morphogenetic cycles. As with the SEPs, the existence of a CEP depends on the existence of past cultural context and past socio-cultural interactions. In this context, experiencing morphogenetic cycles bring new CEPs out. Thus, these cycles always follow each other, so every CEP retains some patterns of the previous CEPs (M. Archer, 1995). So far, the basic view of MA on sociological structural change processes and the general framework of MA have been described in detail.

### **General Criticisms of MA**

Some sociologists have offered criticisms of MA in the last fifteen years. Before the description of MA's concepts one by one, it is better to provide the criticisms of social science scholars against MA in this section. In general, MA is considered by many sociologists as a very sophisticated and convincing approach, both conceptually and intellectually. Stones (2001) states that MA brings a conceptual richness and a new, different perspective to the structure and agency dualism (Stones, 2001). According to other sociologists such as (McAnulla, 2002) and Willmott (2000), the elements of culture are successfully accommodated into the structure and agency dualism in MA. These scholars also emphasize that the 'ideational' aspect of social life, which is culture and its role, is defined clearly in MA. Carter (2000)

mentions that MA is a successful approach in explaining social change processes. (Carter, 2000) also supports the words of Archer mentioned below:

...the distinctive feature of the morphogenetic approach is its recognition of the temporal dimension, through which and in which structure and agency shape one another. (2000, p.92).

(Czerniewicz, Williams, & Brown, 2008) assert that MA provides social scientists with a rich and worthy framework so that social change processes can be examined in depth using MA's consideration of structure and agency:

Archer's theory of the relationship of agency and structure would provide a rich and valuable framework to deepen our understanding of these important biographical accounts (2008, p.87).

Some negative criticisms have also been offered against MA in the literature. (Hay, 2002) argues that MA comprises an ontological dualism rather than an analytical dualism. He states, 'to speak of the different temporal domains is ... to reify and ontologise an analytical distinction' (Hay, 2002). In addition, Hay (2002) considers that the concept of 'agent' is not defined very well in MA:

The morphogenetic approach implies a residual structuralism only punctuated periodically yet infrequently by a largely unexplicated conception of agency (Hay, 2002).

Akram also argue that 'there are significant problems with Archer's concept of agency' (Akram, 2013). King (1999) describes the morphogenetic approach's ontology as 'fallacious', believing 'any form of ontological dualism which posits a realm of objective or structural features is a mere reification'. According to him, a theorist has to argue that 'there are some other aspects of society which are independent of any individual in that society' (King, 1999). In contrast to scholars who consider MA as a complex and stratified approach, (Jessop, 2005) asserts that MA is a 'unilinear' and a 'monoplanar' approach. Jessop also argues that the concept of 'space' is ignored in MA:

...it adopts a flat temporal ontology, neglects space, and treats the poles of structure and agency in terms of a relatively undifferentiated concept of society and people rather than engaging with specific sets of structural constraints and different kinds of social forces... (2005, p. 47).



Finally, some sociologists such as (King, 1999), (Stones, 2001), (Salgado & Gilbert, 2013) raise the issue of 'what emergence means' or 'what emergence should mean', which is not clear in MA. (Elder-Vass, 2007) also accepts the weakness of MA in defining the concept of 'emergence'; therefore, he tries to contribute to MA by searching for ways of filling in this gap. It is seen that most criticisms against MA are on a very philosophical level. The developer of this approach, Archer, has answered these criticisms on the same philosophical level (M. Archer, 2000; M. Archer, 2007, 2010). This study attempts to use MA as an operational methodological tool to fill in a property market research. Therefore, criticisms especially regarding the practical use of this approach are much more important than theoretical criticisms because the strengths and weaknesses of MA in explaining the structural change process of a property market is more important for this study rather than other philosophical issues. To understand the explanatory power of MA, it is necessary to see the use of this approach as a methodological tool in past empirical studies (Pawson & Tilley, 1997).

It is seen that MA has not been used very much up to now in empirical research in social sciences. In the literature, a few empirical studies which use MA as a methodological tool have been carried out. In the first three of these studies, MA has been applied to the field of education. (Quinn, 2006), using MA, tried to analyse the emergence of an official academic staff development programme in a small university in South Africa. Priestly (2007) tried to understand changes in the secondary education system in Scotland with the help of MA. In this context, Priestly examined the issue of how teachers adapt their schools' education curriculums to the new secondary education system developed by the government. Czerniewicz et al. (2008) also applied MA to the field of education (Czerniewicz et al., 2008). Using MA, these scholars tried to explain the relationship between the provision of technological equipment for students by universities and the use of this equipment by students in three different universities in South Africa. Swain (2004) was the first to apply MA to a social field other than education (Swain, 2004). Swain has attempted to understand the emergence and development process of retail warehouses in UK with the help of MA. The final study using MA as a methodological tool belongs to Fleetwood (Fleetwood, 2008). Fleetwood has adapted the concepts of MA, such as structure, institution, agency and habit, to a specific social field, 'labour markets'. In this way, he tried to reify and clarify these concepts in an empirical research project. The aim of Fleetwood's research was to see empirically the

reality of the structure/agency relationship which is mentioned in MA.

It is possible to find both positive and negative criticisms against MA in the literature but which is clear is MA has been adapted to real world situations very few up to now. To develop MA into a methodological tool which can be used easily in all social fields, it is necessary to test the suitability of this approach for real world situations through using it in more empirical research in varied social fields. Starting from this need, the concepts of MA are re-specified to property market studies in the next section.

### **RE-SPECIFICATION OF CONCEPTS IN THE MORPHOGENETIC APPROACH FOR PROPERTY MARKET RESEARCH**

A property market is considered as a social construct according to the institutional approach (the cultural economy version). As a social construct, a property market is identified and formed by the perceptions and activities of social agents (Healey, 1992, 1995), (Guy & Henneberry, 2000). The institutional approach accepts that, like all social systems, property markets are created by certain social actors in a certain time; and property markets may change dependent on social actors' decisions and behaviours and dependent on interrelations between social actors (Healey, 1995; Henneberry & Roberts, 2008). According to this approach, social actors and interrelations between them, and also social structures established to condition property market players prevent the emergence of sudden structural and cultural changes in a property market so the change of a property market has to be considered as a process which progresses cumulatively and evolutionary (Keogh & D'Arcy, 1999; Magalhaes, 1998). The issue of how a property market is created and how it changes in time is important because property markets have an efficient role in the development of urban built environments (D'Arcy & Keogh, 1998). Property markets are not social systems which affect only the type and quality of urban environments. Besides, they play a crucial role in the provision of social justice, in the prevention of poverty and in the enhancement of life quality in urban societies (M., 2011). Therefore, social actors involved in a property market, social structures which are created historically by these social actors and the influential power of these structures on the decisions and behaviour of property market players are significant issues to be emphasized in property studies. In short, when the creation and evolution of a property market is known, the ways of developing that property market into one which serves positive urban developments may be explored easily.



As mentioned before, MA explains a sociological change process using the structure and agency dualism. The change process of a property market may also be explained using a structure and agency dualism. The property market may then represent the 'structure' and property companies may represent 'agents'.

In line with this, for a property market research, "structures" may refer to:

- Laws
- Public Authorities
- Associations

These are macro structures which condition agents, in other words which strongly promote certain behaviours of agents in a social system. Laws are a set of rules, enforceable by the courts, regulating the government, the relationship between the organs of the government and the subjects of a country, and the relationship or conduct of subjects towards each other. 'Public authorities' refer to a country's national or local government agencies. 'Associations' are the organizations of the actors in a property market that have a common purpose and a formal structure.

"Agents" may refer to:

- Property Construction, Development and Investment Companies
- Property Service Companies (Consultancy, Agency, Management, Valuation)

The question of how a property market changes structurally as a result of varied interactions between property companies may be answered through the specification of multi-dimensional upward and downward relations and through the identification of new structures which emerge as a result of the relations established in a property market research. Most industrial companies may display more than one activity in a property market so varied property companies are presented as grouped above. These type of companies are the most important players of a property market because they have the power to promote other market players and to change the structure of a property market.

The concept of '**situational logics**' may refer to property companies' market strategies and the concept of '**intentionality**' may refer to property companies' institutional vision. Collecting data regarding the market strategies and institutional visions of property companies which are active in a property market is not very hard for a researcher; again, there is no need to develop special methods for the specification of situational logics

followed by property companies in a market. 'Intentionality' may refer to the future plans of owners and managers of a company. A company can specify three basic institutional visions for itself in a property market. These are 'grow', 'wait/keep the market position' and 'shrink/leave the market'. 'Intentionality' is a concept regarding MA's structural conditioning stage. The four situational logics regarding the structural conditioning stage in MA may be re-specified as follows:

- a. **Protection:** This is the situational logic that may be followed by property companies which do not want a change in the institutional, legal and industrial setting of a property market in case they lose their existing gains and positions in that market; which become unhappy when another company is involved in the market; which do not renew themselves according to changing market conditions and adapt themselves to these changing conditions; and which are closed to cooperation with other companies.
- b. **Correction:** This is the situational logic that may be followed by property companies which do not want a change in the institutional, legal and industrial setting of a property market in case they lose their existing gains and positions in that market; which become unhappy when another company is involved in the market; which try to renew themselves to keep their market positions at the same level and to adapt themselves to the changing market conditions to re-gain their market powers which they are slowly losing; and which are closed to cooperation with other companies.
- c. **Elimination:** This is the situational logic that may be followed by property companies which want a change in the institutional, legal and industrial setting of a property market in order to find an opportunity to raise their positions and to become more powerful in the property market; which perceive the presence of other companies in the market as a threat to themselves; which try to remove other companies from the market, to seize opportunities much more than before and to increase their market power as much as possible; and which are open to cooperation with some companies to remove some other companies from the market.
- d. **Opportunism:** This is the situational logic that may be followed by property companies which want a change in the institutional, legal and industrial setting of a property market in order to find an opportunity to raise their



positions and to become more powerful in the property market; which want to become powerful by accurately reading and following the development trends of the market; which become happy when a company is involved in the market; which perceive this involvement as an opportunity for themselves; which are open to cooperation with other companies; and which try to turn every development into an opportunity for themselves in the market, but do not perceive the presence of other companies as a threat to themselves, and do not try to remove other companies from the market.

According to MA, if agents follow the situational logics of 'protection' or 'correction', the existing structural setting of a social system is maintained and sustained in the same way. In other words, these logics do not take the social system to a structural change. As a result, structures which emerge at the end of a cycle will be the same as structures which exist at the beginning of that cycle. In contrast, if agents follow the situational logics of 'elimination' and 'opportunism', the existing structural setting of the social system changes; these logics take the social system to a structural change and as a result structures which emerge at the end of the cycle will be different from structures which exist at the beginning of that cycle (see Table 1).

The presence of an excessive number of companies which follow the 'protection' logic may be a factor which limits or delays a structural change in a property market because the logic of protection is based on the principle of remaining 'unchanged'. The presence of an excessive number of companies which follow the 'correction' logic may be an indicator that the balance of power has started to be disturbed, so a structural change has already started in that property market. If that is the case, this means the social integration of that property market is getting weaker and some incompatibilities are seen between the legal/institutional structure and the industrial structure. Again, this means that existing companies are at risk of losing their positions and power in that market. The presence of an excessive number of companies which follow the 'elimination' logic may indicate that there are some problems or conflicts between industrial players in the property market. Then, a change in the legal and institutional setting of the market is required for the solution of these problems in order to increase the level of social integration in that market. The presence of an excessive number of companies which follow the 'opportunism' logic may take a property market to a rapid structural change, because these

companies may work hard, moving in a very active and organized way, to change that property market structure to the benefit of themselves. In this context, the situational logics that may be followed and their results for a property market study are shown in Table 3 below. This table shows the morphogenetic analysis method that may be used in a property market research.

**Table 3.** Morphogenetic analysis method: MA’s situational logics and their outcomes ((M. Archer, 1995) adapted by the author)

Agents	Followed Situational Logics	Result: Legal and Institutional Change in the market	Final Products
Property companies in a property market	Protection	No	The continuation of current laws, public authorities and associations in the same way
	Correction		
	Elimination	Yes	The emergence of new or revised laws, public authorities and associations
	Opportunism		

MA explains the social interaction stage with the concepts of bargaining power and negotiating strength and emphasizes ‘resources’ in the operation of these mechanisms. ‘Resources’ may refer to resources which property companies need to operate in a property market. The bargaining power may refer to market resources which are held by property companies operating in a property market. It is necessary to find and define market resources initially to understand and see which company possesses which resources in a property market. The negotiating strength may refer to the role of resources in partnership negotiations between property companies or business negotiations between companies and their clients in a property market. In other words, in the context of the negotiating strength concept, these questions may be asked and answered: ‘How does a property company use its resources in a negotiation process?’ and ‘How does the use of these resources affect the success of the realisation of a partnership or a business?’ Interactions between agents may refer to the establishment of a legal partnership between property companies or the establishment of a business agreement between companies and their clients based on a formal agreement in a property market. Issues with regard to the operation of bargaining power and negotiating strength mechanisms in partnership or business negotiations and their impact on a property market’s structural change process may be considered as follows: ‘The structure of a property market



changes when a company uses its resources in a negotiation process in a successful way and this negotiation process finishes with the establishment of an institutional partnership or with the creation of a business. If the resources of companies and the use of these resources in negotiation processes do not ensure the realisation of a partnership or a business agreement, the current industrial setting continues in the same way and so the structure of that property market does not change' (see Table 4).

**Table 4.** Mechanisms of the bargaining power and the negotiating strength and their outcomes for a property market study ((M. Archer, 1995) adapted by the author)

Agents	Mechanisms	The realisation of a partnership or a business	Result
Property Companies	Bargaining Power (the resources of companies) & Negotiating strength (the role of resources in partnership or business negotiations)	No	Stasis (No change in the structure of the property market)
		Yes	Genesis (change in the structure of the property market)

The author has faced with some problems while re-specifying MA's concepts for property market studies. The next section considers these hardships.

**DISCUSSION: MA'S STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

MA separates agents into primary and corporate agents in a social system so the author has tried to separate companies as active and passive in a property market. However, this attempt has revealed the first gap in MA. MA explains a social structural change by the transformation of primary agents into corporate agents and by the increase of corporate agents in a social system. Some struggles then begin between old and new corporate agents and these struggles support a change in that social system. However, changes in a property market do not fit into this explanation. Instead of a 'primary agent-corporate agent' relationship, a clear 'corporate agent-corporate agent' relationship is always seen in all interactions in a property market at all trajectories. A property company has to follow-up new businesses regularly; it has to arrange transactions successfully; it has to keep its inter-sectoral relations alive; and it has to be always open to cooperation and partnerships with other property companies to survive in a competitive property market environment (See also Wong, Chau, & Lai, 1996). In this way, a property company can only stand, grow and gain power in a property market. A company who stays passive for a while in a

property market cannot find new clients and so its market share and power starts to run down (See D'Arcy & Keogh, 1998). Since all property companies have to be active in a competitive market environment, the separation of companies into 'active' and 'passive' is not meaningful in a property market.

MA divides a structural change process into three successive stages and settles every stage in a separate clear time period. However, the division of a structural change process in a property market into separate stages and the examination of these stages in separate clear time periods may not be easy because of the interpenetration of these three stages in the development of a property market. The enactment of new laws and the emergence of new institutions progress historically and cumulatively in a property market so the three stages of the morphogenetic cycle from a time perspective may not be adapted exactly to the change of a property market.

There are many concepts related to the three stages in MA. This situation increases the complexity of the morphogenetic analysis. Therefore, a conceptual simplification is necessary for researchers in the application of MA to a real world situation. For example, the concepts 'involuntaristic placements', 'vested interests' and 'opportunity costs' may be left out of a property market study because special methods are required to collect and analyse data about these concepts. Instead of these three concepts, the concept of 'situational logics' [which may refer to property companies' market strategies], which is the combined outcome of the three concepts mentioned above, may be used in a property market research. Collecting data regarding the market strategies may not be very hard for researchers; again, there will be no need to develop special methods for the specification of situational logics followed by companies in a property market. Unfortunately, data collection and analysis methods for many concepts are missing in MA.

MA is not an approach which is very interested in the characteristics of final products which emerge at the end of a morphogenetic cycle. The most important matter for MA is the realisation of 'change' at the end of a cycle. However, the characteristics of the final structural products (SEPs) which emerge at the end of a morphogenetic cycle should also be explored using morphogenetic analysis. For example, the content of new laws and the aim/characteristics of new public authorities/associations which emerge as a result of interactions between property market players may have an importance for some property research. MA says nothing about the features of



emergent properties (SEPs) which are the final products of a morphogenetic cycle.

### **CONCLUSION**

This research shows that MA is a useful methodological tool which may be used in explaining all kinds of social change processes, including the change process of a local property market. MA contextually is a very sophisticated and comprehensive approach because it uses many old and new concepts while explaining multi-dimensional and complex social change processes. The conceptual richness of MA allows researchers to take very different aspects of social structural changes into consideration and to examine these aspects in detail. However, the conceptual richness also makes the use of MA difficult as an operational tool in a social research. In addition, data collection and analysis methods for some concepts are missing in MA, which can be a problem in fieldworks for researchers. Therefore, a conceptual simplification in the use of MA as a methodological approach is necessary in a research.

The structure and agency resolution of MA works in an accurate, successful and unproblematic way in a property market research. 'Structure' may refer to laws, public authorities and associations and 'agency' may refer to companies in a property market. Changes in the structure of a property market, as a consequence of the decisions and efforts of property companies, may be explored and explained with the help of MA's unique understanding of structure and agency dualism.

MA emphasizes the importance of resources and the use of these resources in social negotiation processes. Indeed, resources may play a key role in the realisation of industrial partnerships (partner alliances, franchises, joint ventures and acquisitions) or in the creation of businesses in a property market. The use of MA opens a new door emphasizing the significance and importance of resources in property market research.

This work reveals an important gap in MA. MA defines agents as 'corporate' (active) and 'primary' (passive) in a social system. However, this distinction is meaningless and invalid in a property market because there is no place for passive companies (agents) in a property market. Every player has to be active in a market. Otherwise, companies without any activity may be quickly pushed out of that property market (social system).

The morphogenetic cycle introduces the idea that social events do not appear suddenly; past events may have an impact on the emergence of social events today and in the future. This perspective of MA [that social events are interconnected with

each other] may be used easily and successfully in property market research because laws-public authorities-associations are historical; it means they all complete to each other and they emerge cumulatively dependent on periodical market conditions. Naturally, a past law or an institution affects the context of future laws and institutions.

Finally, relations between 'social structures' and 'space' in a social system are not an issue which is discussed comprehensively in MA. The spatial (locational) characteristics of a city are a very important factor in the structural change process of that city's property market. Therefore, issues associated with 'the significance of space' should be taken into consideration much more in a morphogenetic cycle. In addition, MA is not an approach which is very interested in the characteristics of structural emergent properties (SEPs), which appear at the end of a morphogenetic cycle. MA says nothing about the features of emergent properties (SEPs) which are the final products of a morphogenetic cycle.

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### Resume

*Dr.Fatih EREN graduated from Selcuk University, Department of City and Regional Planning (Hons) in 2003. Right after graduation, he started to work as a “research assistant” in the same department. During assistantship work, he took charge as a “researcher” in several research and application projects which were funded by Turkey’s important public institutions. Meanwhile, he got MSc degree with a thesis on public and private partnerships in urban regenerations. He won a governmental scholarship from Turkish Council of Higher Education (YÖK) in 2007 and his PhD education then started in the Department of Town and Regional Planning at the University of Sheffield, UK. After the completion of PhD, which is about the internationalization process of Istanbul’s property market, he turned back to Selcuk University, Department of City and Regional Planning as a “lecturer” at the beginning of 2013. His profession and research interest is on urban and regional planning, property markets, property development and investment so he is now teaching and conducting research on these areas at this university.*