


# Lefebvre Henri. (2022). *On the Rural: Economy, Sociology, Geography*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Stuart Elden and Adam David Morton (editors). 304 pp.

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The book *On the Rural: Economy, Sociology, and Geography* by Henri Lefebvre, republished by Stuart Elden and Adam David Morton, is an invitation to rethink the practices of the capitalist mode of production of space and to value, in its fair dimension, the epistemological contributions that Lefebvre built in rural theory. This long-winded French Marxist sociologist, intellectual, and philosopher, whose work has come in and out of fashion several times, both in sociology, geography, and political science, left an extraordinarily extensive work that is well worth reviewing periodically, especially for those interested in themes that revolve not only around land ownership, the landowning class, land rent, agriculture but also subterranean and underwater resources, as well as ranching and early 20th-century urbanization. Additionally, in this edition, the last two chapters offer empirical, conceptual, and crucial details of Lefebvre's study of the Pyrenean valley of Campan. In short, rethinking urban growth, daily life, the agrarian community, and class consciousness is the urgent slogan advocated by the work in each of its 12 chapters.

Chapter 1 begins with a radical philosophical critique, since, from a philosophy of necessity, it delves into the contradictions between the industrial and agricultural eras and questions: Can it be said that the contradictions drive growth and development? Urban contradictions, such as the conflict between integration and segregation, between the urban and the State, between private property and the socialization of the production process, or between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

Chapter 2 focuses on the village in its sense of community, which cannot be reduced to an accidental mix of people, animals, or things, since its structure reveals balances between the amount of arable land, forests, pastures, and groups of living beings for whom the Earth provides subsistence. This balance has maintained the rural community despite the different modes of production: slave, feudal, capitalist, and socialist, through which it has passed, where collective law, seen as a causal succession of forms of property and community, must be examined.

In Chapter 3, with the case of Tuscany, the sociologist of rural space analyzes the world of sharecropping and how it ceased to be a hereditary and perpetual position as sharecroppers gradually turned toward individualism. Indeed, it narrates how sharecropping may have evolved into capitalist exploitation to become a form of agricultural lease.

In Chapter 4, he pays attention to the study of the peasant reality of France and how the agricultural revolution of the 18th century laid the foundations for the peasant France of later centuries, a period with a horizontal complexity where peasant producers predominated. They did not pay rent to the owner of the land on which they worked, along with the absence of an original peasant culture, with peasants isolated from scientific culture, where religion was the only ruling ideology in such rural areas.

In Chapter 5, from a more geographical approach, he examines class relations in the agrarian structures of underdeveloped countries, as well as their transformations from external impositions of an economic nature, such as industrial mechanization and the introduction of specialized crops typical of a commercial capitalism, or demographic and sociological, as a consequence of its subordination to the needs of colonialism and imperialism, such as social mobility, migration, and resettlement of populations.

In Chapter 6, Lefebvre invites us to remember the two agrarian models: that of the Roman empire, which ensured that the large estates were dominant, and that of Byzantium, which ensured that the primitive community persisted so that the figures of head of the family, members of the village community, the kolkhoz or agricultural cooperatives, as well as the rights of neighbors and other community

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laws were not lost. From there, it is easy to understand Lefebvre's questioning about why Marx always assigned greater importance to the agrarian community. Well, Marx assumed that it is possible to move from the agrarian community to socialism.

In Chapter 7, Henri Lefebvre focuses his attention on the theory of rent, or ground rent, with which historical and social facts are usually explained; however, he argues that it is of course incomplete and useless if it is not added to the notion of absolute rent and that of relative rent. Only in this way will it be possible to understand the double monopoly that simultaneously reorganizes the agrarian structure and the distribution of peasant income.

In Chapter 8, he explains the differences between these two types of rent: the differential rent is derived from the production price, and the absolute rent is derived from the surplus of the market price that is located above the production price. This generates a fight between the monopoly of land ownership and the monopoly of exploitation. In such a scenario, commonly, price fixing directed or orchestrated by the State enters the scene.

In Chapter 9, the urban sociologist asks: How can we define everyday life? How to achieve greater awareness of everyday life? In this regard, he points out that the critical understanding of everyday life is defined as an important part of general semantics, where new words and turns of speech are born from everyday life. But it also encompasses forms of sociability and social spontaneity, which leads to understanding the formation of certain social groups within the workplace, home, places of entertainment, or on the street.

In Chapter 10, he pays attention to the new urban centers of the middle of the 20th century, such as the Lacq–Mourenx urban industrial complex, characterized by being part of the group of spontaneous cities produced by “Cantonalizing” or building, based on concrete, rapidly. Now, like any initial phenomenon, Lefebvre says that the new city serves as a social laboratory to study the conflicts between ways of experiencing reality, life, and class consciousness, as well as overpopulation and socio-psychiatry derived from neurosis cephalo-urban, where the new working class, at first, thanks to a strong sense of social cohesion and cultural creativity, refuses to cede its autonomy to state authorities.

In Chapter 11, he raises the question: Is it naive to equip the new city with a university academy so as to provide spaces and artistic vocations to the new members of the community? With this, he makes a severe criticism of the functions of the city and also warns that neither of the two models—the ancient city, despite its beauty, and the medieval city, despite its prodigious vitality—can function as models for the way of living, working, and recreating in the new city. To solve the problem, you say, shouldn't we reinvent or imagine new monuments or various types of monuments? Shouldn't we differentiate the city in another way? With other legislation, shouldn't we create a polycentric city? To better organize traffic.

Finally, in Chapter 12, using the example of the Vallée de Campan agropastoral community, he analyzes the evolution of the concept of land ownership from the evolution of the concept of “fief,” which, according to Lefebvre, at the beginning referred only to property rights, a kind of perpetual property where all active owners were represented; thus, the community retained all its territories, collective assets, and private property, but ultimately its rights were reduced and limited by individual appropriation. Since the feudal lords were “inherent” owners of the lands that the community had the right to use, they began to consider themselves as owners in the full sense of the word.

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## References

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