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Putting Lefebvre to Work on “The Rural”,

C Gristy *Institute of Education*

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CHAPTER 14

PUTTING LEFEBVRE TO WORK ON "THE RURAL"

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Social and cultural studies over the past 20 years have been witnessing a “spatial turn,” an intellectual engagement with place and space, as a response to a longstanding ontological and epistemological bias that has privileged time over space (Soja, 2008). This is part of a wider theoretical project that grapples with the “unremitting materiality of the world” (Thrift, 2006, p. 139). It appears to offer promise to those looking for acknowledgement that in education place and space matters, in particular in its spatiality of inequalities and injustices (Gulson & Symes, 2007). This chapter uses the work of theorist Henri Lefebvre as a starting point for a spatial engagement with education in rural places. Lefebvre offers a set of ideas to use in developing understanding of the issues observed, connecting these into wider conversations about education, particularly those concerned with equity and justice.

Lefebvre’s work requires us to understand space in relation to the practices that produce it (Christie, 2013); for Lefebvre, space is socially produced. He asks us to analyze space in terms of social relations rather than

the “things” within it. Lefebvre envisages all space as social space; hyper-complex, overlapping, intertwined, flowing, moving, interfering, and interrupting in a multiplicity of ways (Christie, 2013). In this chapter, Lefebvre’s ideas about space, particularly his triad of spatial practice, are put to work on a case study of a rural community and its schools. Christie (2013) argues that Lefebvre’s triad can enable fine-grained analysis of the different activities of spatial production, particularly the mapping of the historical assembly of enduring social patterns of inequality. This chapter considers the possibilities of Lefebvre’s work for those using rural contexts and practices looking to counter or interrupt normative, metro-centric hegemonic discourse and practice.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THEORY

Kvalsund and Hargreaves carried out a research review on rural schools and education across Nordic countries and the United Kingdom (Hargreaves, Kvalsund, & Galton, 2009) and identified two substantive issues. The first is that much of the research reviewed was dated, being over 10 years old at the time of their study. Secondly, an “external system perspective” dominated most of the research about rural places (Kvalsund & Hargreaves, 2009), in which the researchers looked in from the outside through the lenses of global or national policies, but did not “look out” towards communities and environments. This external system perspective begins with national policy and practice, because this is what dominates the lives and thoughts of education leaders, policy makers, and practitioners. Kvalsund and Hargreaves (2009) call for a new agenda to include independent research, to start from and focus on aspects of education, with schools and communities being seen together as learning environments. They ask researchers to begin from the lived experiences of learners in rural places, but also to improve the rigor of research to include, amongst other things, development and an analytical use of theory (Kvalsund & Hargreaves, 2009, p. 147). They argue for case studies that move beyond description, with theoretical rather than policy-based foundations.

Fine grained case studies that attend to the sites and practices of the lived experiences of education abound in rural education literature, but, as Corbett (2015) suggests, there are risks associated with these kinds of studies. These stories, he argues, can trap or become entrapped in static narratives of deficit, when labeled as “rural education,” they have limited access to, and exposure in other bodies of education literature. This entrapment also limits the reach of this body of educational research.

The potential reach of much of the research work on education in rural places is limited by the absence of appropriate theorizing (Kvalsund &

Hargreaves, 2009). Engaging with theory is part of the research *footprint* (White et al., 2012). A research footprint can be thought of as not only the disturbance created by the researchers and their instruments, but also the lasting ripples and repercussions of the researcher-community and of inter-community relationships (Kvalsund & Hargreaves, 2014, p. 43) and their legacies (in the form of relationships), material changes to the locality, and publications about the place and about the research. These research footprints may be beneficial, raising awareness of social injustice, inequalities and environmental issues, but for the same reason, can also be risky and result in damage to people and their places, as well as to the wider reputation of ideas of the rural and of education. Great care must be taken with theory, ethics, and methodology in the conduct of research in any place, but particularly in small rural communities (Gristy, 2014) to counter negative effects of research or "damage" of any kind.

Putting theory to work on case studies, specific sites or incidents, could be a way to optimize the beneficial aspects of the footprints of research, and to extend reach, making it possible to do work in wider spaces of educational enquiry. In a recently translated essay, Lefebvre (1956/2016) suggests:

Beginning with description but soon confronted with problems that exceed simple descriptions, what is required is another tool of investigation distinct from empiricism. By delving deeply into the problem of rural sociology in order to grasp its laws, the process is confronted as simultaneously historical, economical, and social. In order to know the objective process, a theory is needed. (p. 72)

It can be argued that rural issues have no place or space in global or national drives (Tieken, 2014); work in and of the rural is seen to be of limited value in the business of modernity. However, putting theory to work in educational research within rural context and/or focus can make significant contributions, for example, to the growing body of literature investigating education from different social, political, and geographical situations.

Kvalsund and Hargreaves (2009) argue that some theoretical frameworks are more suitable for studies that go on in rural spaces and places where theory needs to be sensitive to the scale of investigation.

Kvalsund and Hargreaves (2014, p. 45) argue that *specific explanatory theories* such as life course theory (see, e.g., Elder, Kirkpatrick Johnson, & Crosnoe, 2003) or Bourdieu's theories of social and cultural capital (see Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) take account of the scale of the study, so may be more appropriate for rural studies than *general descriptive theory*. These theories are context sensitive and also trouble or scrutinize the position of the researcher. Other theories here might include those informed by indigenous knowledge, or the post-human work of Deleuze and Guattari on the molecular scale of life (1984), or vital materialists and Actor Network

Theorists (e.g., Latour, 2005) on the agency of all things human and non-human. There is also the work of Lefebvre, the focus of this chapter.

Henri Lefebvre, a spatial theorist, whose work can be applied as being of both specific and general explanatory theory. As Christie (2013) argues, Lefebvre offers ways of thinking that embrace both the local and the national-global at the same time, “the local never disappears into regional or national or global spaces, but continues to exist” (Christie, 2013, p. 777). So with Lefebvre, work from and in rural contexts can engage on different scales and concurrently.

GEOGRAPHY MATTERS AND THE “SPATIAL TURN”

Space has long ceased to be seen as a passive geographic or empty geometric media. For Lefebvre (1991), space is an “encounter, assembly, simultaneity... [of] everything that there is in space, everything that is produced either by nature or by society, either through their co-operation or through their conflicts. Everything: living beings, things, objects, works, signs and symbols” (p. 101).

Reflections on the social production of space that are proving useful, particularly in education, can be found in social and cultural studies and in the writings of geographers: Doreen Massey, Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey, and Edward Soja. In the context of rural education, contemporary work on space can be found in the writings of, amongst others, Bill Green and Joanna Reid, Phil Roberts, Michael Corbett, Keith Halfacree, and Pam Christie.

INTRODUCTION TO THE WORK OF HENRI LEFEBVRE

Henri Lefebvre (1901–1991) was a French philosopher who inhabited the limits of Western Marxism and historical materialism (Elden, 2004, p. 193). Although he was a prolific writer much of his work has not yet been translated into English. His ideas are underpinned by his interest in everyday life. A recent translation of an essay, *The theory of ground rent and rural sociology* (Elden & Morton, 2016), shows Lefebvre’s early interests were in rural questions. However, Lefebvre is better known in the Anglophone world as a theorist who focused on the urban because of the significant impact of his major work *La Production de l’Espace* (1974) that was translated into English and published as *The Production of Space* in 1991. Lefebvre’s published work was produced rapidly, with brilliant projects; yet these were rarely completed (Merrifield, 2006). This stuttering (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986) rate of the production of ideas and of publications, results in meanings

which are unsettling and troubling, yet also make the work experimental and approachable; you can enter it and write your own chapter (Merrifield, 2006). It is in the current “third wave” (Goonewardena, Kipfer, Milgrom, & Schmid, 2008) of interpretation of Lefebvre’s writing where his work is being considered as a point of departure, resulting in its use in a wider range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary contexts, such as education (Kipfer, Goonewardena, Schmid, & Milgrom, 2008). Recent studies on the production of space and the spatial distribution of resources, systems, structures, policies, and so on in education, include those of, for example, Middleton (2014), Loxley, O’Leary, and Minton, (2011), and Thompson, Russell, and Simmons, (2014).

Lefebvre’s primary arguments in *The Production of Space* center on how the production of social relationships and space has become part of the reproduction of the capitalist system; space, he argues, is *produced* through social practices and so becomes the ultimate locus and medium of struggle (Elden, 2004, p. 183). For Lefebvre (1976), “there is a politics of space because space is political” (p. 33).

KEY IDEAS OF LEFEBVRE THAT HAVE RESONANCE IN WORK ON EDUCATION, RURALITY, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Lefebvre Had an Interest in Everyday Life

Lefebvre’s theories seem appropriate for researchers in rural education spaces and places, as he had a constant interest in and focus on everyday life (see, e.g., Lefebvre, 1987, 2000). Lefebvre’s ideas are suitable for use at the molecular level (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) engaging with the smallest and seemingly the least significant details of the everyday life of education places and spaces.

Space Can be Seen as Sites of and for Change

Lefebvre’s work also appears to lend itself to those looking to develop an understanding of the geographies of injustices. For Lefebvre, the work of social change involved developing critical knowledge of the actual process of the production of space. The notion that space is actively produced, with social and material relations, or that social relations actively produce spatial relations, offers, Christie (2013) argues, an opportunity for theory and possible counter action in order to attend to “ways in which spatial practices can be interrupted, countered, and disrupted” (p. 778).

Space Can be Considered at a Micro and Macro Level, at The Same Time

Lefebvre (1991) envisages space as hypercomplex: “We are confronted not by one social space but by many—indeed by an unlimited multiplicity or uncountable set of social spaces” (p. 86) that are multilayered with layers “embracing... individual entities and peculiarities, relatively fixed points, movements and waves—some interpenetrating, others in conflict and so on” (p. 88). This hypercomplex view of space means that social space includes both local places and global ones and that “the local never disappears into regional or national or global spaces but continues to exist” (Christie, 2013, p. 777).

Lefebvre’s ideas of space provide a frame for exploring local practices (*and* global practices, simultaneously). However, this is not a straightforward thing to do. As Christie (2013) lays out, the challenges to researchers include being aware of, acknowledging, and analyzing the multiple and complex social relationships inherent in the production of space as a continuous encounter. These “relationships include historical forms, present practices, things as well as humans. The sounds and the silences, intimate rhythms of the self and those of the state political, imaginary, material, the everyday global” (Christie, 2013, p. 777). The task, “to render intelligible qualities of space that are both perceptible and imperceptible to the senses, is a tough challenge and is a task that necessitates both empirical and theoretical investigation” (Merrifield, 2006, p. 108).

Lefebvre works through the complexity of space by arguing it needs to be understood, not in the usual two ways, as the *conceived*, abstract thought of space, or of the *perceived*, concrete reality of space, but in three ways, with the addition of space as *lived* (Elden, 2004, p. 187). He calls this heuristic a “spatial triad.”

LEFEBVRE’S SPATIAL TRIAD

As a conscious move to transcend binary thinking and the establishment of oppositions, Lefebvre, among others, developed thinking triads or trialectics (see also, e.g., Deleuze & Guattari, 1994). Lefebvre’s (1991) triad of perceived–conceived–lived space is articulated in *The Production of Space*. The triad is not described in much detail but it is clear that it is not a mechanical framework or a typology, but more of an “orientation” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 423). Lefebvre referred to the three elements of the triad as *l’espace perçu* (perceived space), *l’espace conçu* (conceived space), and *l’espace vécu* (lived space). These three are referred to as *spatial practices, representations of*

space, and *spaces of representation*. The three elements are fluid and alive and blur into each other (Merrifield, 2006).

Spatial Practices, *L'espace Perçu*, Perceived Space

This is physical, real, concrete space, space that is generated and used (Elden, 2004, p. 190). Concrete space is the space of gestures and journeys, of the body and memory, of symbols and sense-making (Elden, 2004, p. 189). Spatial practices have close affinity to people's perception of the world: perceived space. "Spatial practices structure lived reality; routes, networks, patterns and interactions" (Merrifield, 2006, p. 110) which develop continuity and cohesion: "In terms of social space, and of each member of a given society's relationship to that space, this cohesion implies a guaranteed level of competence and a specific level of performance" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33). Spatial practices "embrace production and reproduction, conception and execution, the conceived as well as the lived" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33). Everyday spatial practices make the local seem absolutely local; on the other hand, they make the global seem absolutely global. Spatial practices thus pivot around the "thing" world of everyday life (Merrifield, 2006, p. 134).

Representations of Space, *L'espace Conçu*, Conceived Space

For Lefebvre (1991), conceived space "is the space of scientists, planners, urbanist, technocratic sub-dividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent—all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived" (p. 38). This is the space of *savoir* (knowledge) and logic, of maps, mathematics as the instrumental space of social engineers, navigators, and explorers (Elden, 2004, p. 190). Here, space is a mental construct—imagined space. It is the dominant space of any society and "tied to the relations of production and to the 'order' which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to 'frontal' relations" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33). This is the space of capital; and the state and ideology, power and knowledge lurk in the representations (Merrifield, 2006, p. 109).

Representations of space play a substantial role and specifically influence the production of space. Representation implies the world of abstraction—what is in the head rather than what is in the body. The calculation and measurement result in approximations that begin at the level of abstraction, a level away from the lived. As the representations of space are so powerful, there is a risk of "slippage," with these representations of space

becoming a hyperreality or a simulation (Baudrillard, 1983). Representations of space can become mythical (Barthes, 1972)—the map precedes the territory. In order to make this mythic representation believable, the performance of the place has to accord with the image being promoted. The place and the people become the myth. This is often seen in work in, around, and of, rural places.

Merrifield (2006) argues that there has been a universal capitulation towards the conceived over the lived; abstract space has papered over the whole world and argues for a need to counter the power of abstractions and reclaim our society as lived projects (Merrifield, 2006). These arguments resonate with those of Kvalsund and Hargreaves in their call for rural research to begin, not with national or global scale policy or systems, the realm of conceived space, but with lived experiences, lived space.

Spaces of Representation, *L'espace Vécu*, Lived Space

Spaces of representation are the spaces of everyday experience lived directly

through its associated images and symbols and hence the space of “inhabitants” and “users” and the lived spaces overlay physical space making symbolic use of its objects. Thus representational spaces may be said, though again with certain exceptions, to tend towards more or less coherent systems of nonverbal symbols and signs. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 39)

These are the lived experiences that emerge because of the dialectical relation between spatial practice and representations of spaces. Here the space is produced and modified over time and through its use. Here spaces are infested with symbolism and meaning; they are felt more than thought. This space is of *connaissance*, of less formal or more local forms of knowledge (Elden, 2004) and is real-and-imagined. Space of representation is *alive* (Merrifield, 2006):

It speaks. It has an affective kernel or centre: Ego, bed, dwelling house; or, square, church, graveyard. It embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations and thus immediately implies time. Consequently, it may be qualified in various ways: maybe directional, situational or relational because it is essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 42)

As we think about education research in rural places we must also attend to Lefebvre's (1991) warning that space as directly lived is also the space “of some artists and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who describe and aspire to do no more than describe” (p. 39). There is a

risk that we might only produce descriptive work if we focus solely on lived experiences in our research work. However, as Merrifield (2006) argues, Lefebvre also sees lived experience as a space for development and change and, if he were here, would perhaps argue that a focus on lived experience of education and schooling in rural places would be more effective than a focus on the abstract base of systems and structures. Working with lived spaces, with their human and nonhuman actants, offers opportunities to find sites for change.

PUTTING LEFEBVRE'S TRIAD TO WORK

There are limited published examples in English of the use of Lefebvre's ideas in studies in rural contexts or places of education; a few are worth drawing attention to here. Green, Reid, and Corbett have been developing ideas of rural space that draw on Lefebvre's concept of social space (Corbett, 2016; Green & Corbett, 2013; Reid et al., 2010). There are a number of authors, including Pam Christie, who are using Lefebvre to help develop understanding of the geographies of inequity. Other authors have explored Lefebvre's ideas with respect to education policy and practice contexts (Middleton, 2014), and the appropriation of space in schools by pupils (Loxley et al., 2011) and teachers (Smith, 2014). Researchers are also putting Lefebvre to work on the geography of social issues such as those of young people who are not in education or training (Thompson et al., 2014).

There are a few published studies in English on rural communities that use a Lefebvrian analysis. Halfacree uses Lefebvre's ideas in his work (e.g., Halfacree, 2006, 2007) and there is a notable case study on the gentrification of two villages in England by Phillips (2002).

What follows here is a worked example of a piece of Lefebvrian analysis done when returning to a case study completed some years ago (see Gristy, 2014, for more details). It is in some ways an analysis of a place, an interruption in space (Tuan, 1977) but also an analysis of space within that place. The study begins very small, with the local, whilst also connecting with the regional, national, and global.

A Rural Community and Its Schools: A Worked Example

At the beginning, we must consider the impacts of our research footprints (White et al., 2012), and minimize a risk of harm to spaces, places, and people. This is of particular importance in rural or marginalized places where there are heightened risks of research voyeurism, disturbance, or damage (Gristy, 2014).

The author, who lives and works in and around a similar rural place, carried out this case study of a rural community in England, given the name Morton, and the education provision for its children and young people. To maintain anonymity all names and locality markers have been changed or removed; consequently quotes from texts and sources have not been cited or referenced.

The 3-year case study set out to investigate the role school played in the lives of the young people from Morton. Significant amounts of all kinds of data were generated through the study including documentary material such as local history books, a collection of contemporary and old newspaper articles, local council meeting minutes, and village newsletters. There was also quantitative data in the form of school attendance records and socioeconomic statistical information for the locality. A wide range of people were interviewed in Morton, including a youth worker, parish councillor, two parents of school aged children, the primary school head teacher, and a police officer. People interviewed at the secondary school included members of staff, the education welfare officer, and a school governor. In addition to the documentary and interview data the author kept a research diary of recorded reflections and responses on key events and casual meetings with people who were speaking about Morton.

Spatial Practices: Perceived Space, Material, Concrete, Physical

Morton is a large, compact, isolated village in South West England, centered on a crossroads with a few outlying farms, nine miles (approximately 15 km) away from the nearest town, Riversville. It is clearly a “community of place” (Delanty, 2003) set in a rural, high (relative to the surrounding area) moorland location, 510 m above sea level. Owing to its elevation and geographical location it has a wetter and colder climate than the surrounding area. The granite base rock dates back 295 million years and there are signs of habitation going back to 3,500 years BC. Morton is a village in a postindustrial landscape, a place that in the past has seen extensive quarrying and mineral mining among other small-scale industries. There are beef cattle and sheep farms on the open land around. The village, which currently has a population of around 1,500, is a center for walking and outdoor activities. It has a small grocery shop and post office, a gift shop, and a collection of pubs and cafes. The landscape of the village is dominated by large car parks for summer visitors. New, small business starter units have been built as part of a regeneration program. The church is closed but the chapel still has regular services. The library closed recently, but there is a youth club with its own new building, a football pitch, a new, purpose built

community center, and a nursing home. Much of the land and many of the buildings are owned by one landowner. Bus services leave from here to go to town four times a day on weekdays and Saturdays, in addition to the school bus that takes students to the secondary school. A distinctive stone built bus shelter sits halfway between the two ends of the village. The village primary school had a role of 68 children in 2015, but only 45 in 2016. The primary school building was erected in 1850, of traditional Victorian design and stone construction. The majority of children attending the primary school walk there. Some live on outlying farms and arrive in Morton by car or minibus. The majority of young people aged 11–18 go to the secondary school in Riversville; most of these travel to school each day by bus. The young people divide themselves into halves—the top and bottom of the village—and travel to school on two separate buses.

A wave of building by the majority landowner in the 1960s led to more housing, but much of this is of poorer quality and is now in need of repair and refurbishment. Significant numbers of new private houses are currently being built as a response to housing shortage demands in all regions of the United Kingdom.

Representations of Space; Conceived Space, Abstract, Symbolic

Representations of the space of, in, and around Morton, of its landscape and of those that live there, offer a different view of the place. Abstract representations of space include measurements, local government reports, historical texts, stories, and contemporary discourses. Morton appears in local tourist brochures and history books of the area. Here are two examples. An extract from a local history text reads:

Morton is a grim little town some 1,400 feet above sea level, with an abominable climate of fog, snow, wind, and more than 80 inches of cold rain a year. It stands on a cot between two high moorland tors, exposed to the bitter North and East winds, the least suitable place that could ever have been chosen for a town. But the site was dictated by the landowner so as to be near his granite quarries. (Source, 1954)

AU: Please cite source.

And a contemporary tourism leaflet:

With the wild and imposing moor as a backdrop, Morton is ideal for exploring the region. There's a range of outdoor sports for adrenaline junkies, including climbing, canoeing and walking. The high moors are a place of myth, history and natural beauty and with many antiquities and natural wonders;

you can easily access everything that the high moor has to offer from Morton.
(Source, 2016)

Morton is perceived as being in an area of wild beauty but is also known as a “grim little town” with an unusually cold and wet climate. At the time of the original case study, Morton was undergoing a program of “community regeneration.” An audit carried out as part of this program showed Morton to be a deprived community as measured by the index of multiple deprivation (ODPM, 2004), with access to services being a particular problem, along with high levels of unemployment and poor housing. Much of this housing is rented, with rents being paid for by the local authority. A small group of business units were constructed to promote local employment, but most of these units are still empty. The audit also identified lower than average achievement levels of children at the village primary school and poor school attendance at the secondary school by students from Morton. The combination of these two sets of statistics triggered a review of education provision for Morton’s children and young people.

Data from the case study identifies intensely negative, labeling, separating discourses of, in, and around the village. The talk about the village was negative and the talk in the village was generally negative too, about such things as housing, the landlord, services, schools, young people, older residents, local businesses, and the weather. Here are a few examples:

The cops are there most nights in the car park (Marty, a young person from Morton).

The people in it [Morton] aren’t exactly good (Jo, a young person from Morton).

The local council have dumped quite a few problem families at Morton. (Jill, a parent from Morton)

There is also a negative discourse about Morton in the local press. Mike, one of the students from Morton reports: “[It] said in the paper that there were like in Morton, like youths up to like three o’clock drunk, disorderly, smashing the buildings and stuff.”

In the schools, there was a less explicit but equally detectable negative discourse about Morton: the young people, their families, and the local community. For example, when asked whether a student’s home location affected the way a student was perceived in the secondary school, a teaching assistant replied: “It shouldn’t do, although you may get the situation, like with the Morton ones, where things are different” (Fran at Riversville College). A former Morton primary school head teacher said: “I compare it [my work at the Morton primary school] to my work in an inner city school.” The current acting head teacher of the primary school (which has been deemed by OFSTED [Office for Standards in Education] to be in a state that “requires

improvement") is also an executive head for five other small primary schools, following the national development in the United Kingdom for small schools to form federations. She tries to be at the school at least once a week to meet with staff and parents but does not always make it.

If we attend only to the *representations of space*, Morton would be a place of wild romantic beauty, with great history, but a down-at-heel miserable place to live in for its current inhabitants. The abstract version of Morton would paper over the whole (Merrifield, 2006). It is here that the stories of entrapment are immanent, waiting to be written. Moreover, of course, the act of writing of these spaces, however carefully the writing is crafted, is another abstraction from the real and the material. Writing about spaces and places adds another layer of representation.

The power of the abstract, perceived representations of space over the conceived and lived spaces of Morton is evident here. It is here, in these powerful abstract spaces of representation, hyperrealities of this rural community and its schools emerge. The hyperreal map or model of Morton as the grim little town, formed through exposure to representations through media, culture, history, and so on, takes on a life of its own. In the same way, maps or models of rural places like Morton inform and infiltrate thinking about rural places and schools more generally. This hyperreal version sits firmly in the minds of the school staff, as we see in this case study, and on into the minds of regional and national education leaders and policy makers.

Spaces of Representation: Lived Space, Social, Affective

People who took part in the case study said Morton was "such a remote out place" (Jo, student from Morton). John, a Morton resident said:

People are never meant to have lived here. [In the past Morton was] a place for industry, getting stuff, doing dirty things, not a place for living. So now it is not a good place to live either. There are problems with high rainfall and cold, it gets into the buildings that get wet and stay wet, so are hard to look after. So they get in a bad way, tenants do not look after them, so property all gets bad and looks bad.

One could be consumed by the abstract representations of Morton and the hyperreality created by these. However, listening to the people who contributed to the case study and experiencing being in Morton, attending to the *spaces of representation*, the human and nonhuman actants in the space reveal other ways in which the space is socially and materially constructed. For example, unlikely to be picked up through the engagement of conceived and perceived space in Morton is the importance of the nursing home to the local young people, who sit on the walls outside; it operates

as a “safe space.” Other spaces of representation include the big visitor car parks that are sites for football matches when the grass is waterlogged in the winter. Without attending to the lived spaces in Morton we may miss the importance to the young people’s connections with people who speak languages other than English that international tourists to the village provide.

When spaces of representation are understood as the education provision for the children and young people in Morton, a long-standing series of issues is evident. The primary school sits physically in the center of the village, an archetypal substantial English Victorian building. Children generally walk to school. It would appear to be an institution that is central to life in the village. However, the significance and meaning of this building for the community is understood differently through an analysis that considers it as a space of representation rather than a site of spatial practices or as a representation of a space.

Perceptions of the primary school held by the local education authority and the head teacher of Riversville College suggest that Morton is seen as a troubled place, and, as the audit showed, children’s levels of school achievement and attendance are not good. Listening to people who live in Morton and observing in, out, and around the primary school, it is clear that the lived experience of this school and its community is complicated. A Lefebvrian analysis of observations draws attention to sites of potential alienation or exclusion at the school. For example, some parents of children at the primary school talk about meeting together at the school gate as a positive opportunity to see teachers and chat and gossip. Other parents report that this school gate activity is a barrier to them taking their children to school. The village is a small place. “I can’t be doing with it, going up to the school and that. Everyone gets to know your business” (Mary, a parent whose son Daryl is not attending school). The gathering of parents at the school gate may be a space that needs managing differently by the school leaders, to change the patterns of social interactions that take place there.

AU: Is this phrase correct?

Students who attend the secondary school in Riversville talk of the problems they have on their daily journeys on the school bus that appear to be a key barrier to school attendance. Morton resident Mr. Seccombe said his daughter Megan was not going to school and the reason was that “she hates the bus.” In another chance conversation with a Morton parent at a children’s football training session, I heard a similar story. The children of this family were being taken to school every day in the car because they hated being on the school bus (Research diary entry).

The bus journey to school and the material, the furniture of these journeys, are key sites and spaces of representation. Listening to the young people talk about the bus stop in the middle of the village, one becomes aware of its symbolic meaning—a site that divides the village in two, top and bottom. The young people from each half of the village travel to the secondary

school in different buses. Here in the bus stop shelter, where the two communities meet, there are fights and settlements of scores as well as trysts and secrets. The resulting graffiti are a constant source of battle between the young people and the parish councillors.

Perhaps in the readings depicting the community of Morton as a space for representation, as a place of lived experience, there is again a risk of generating stories of entrapment. However, lived space is alive, always changing and it is here in lived space, Lefebvre argues, that we can find sites of and for change. In Morton, these sites of change might include the school buses, the welcoming entrances at the primary school and dry spaces to play. It is in theorizing work with Lefebvre's spatial triad, that we can connect the stories from Morton with a global engagement of issues of inclusion, exclusion, and social justice in education.

CONCLUSION

Lefebvre's idea of the lived space, in addition to the conceived and perceived, gives us the opportunity to explore the empirical work done on places such as rural schools; but this is challenging work. The three elements of Lefebvre's triad, spatial practices, representations of space, and spaces of representation overlap and are fluid, so that clear boundaries between the perspectives are difficult to achieve. Through the act of writing, representations of space dominate and are difficult to challenge. Case studies that examine the minutiae of everyday life are important but we hope that working and making sense of them through theorizing means we can attempt to unsettle, destabilize, and shift assumptions (Ball, 2006). For example, we can examine how rural education research might be contributing to the development of hegemonies that are based on conceived, perceived, and perhaps hyperreal versions of reality, which may not convey the reality of lived experiences of educators, learners, and communities in rural places. There is a possibility here for engagement with the long-established hegemony of the rural as deficit, for example. Lefebvre provides a framework for the important struggle for researchers to trouble and engage with social practices and material relations at all levels and not collapse analysis into abstract notions. The triad encourages fine-grained, molecular level analysis of the different activities of spatial production. It encourages an engagement with the historical production of spatial inequalities, everyday experiences, and the mapping of these onto representations of space. The spatial triad approach promotes the idea of the activities of schooling as spatial practices being enacted and experienced at a local level in specific schools and communities whilst also being national-global. Using Lefebvre's triad requires a theoretical engagement of the case rather than just a

description. In this way, the use of theory connects the case study with other bodies of work in education that are looking to develop understandings of how spatial, social, material inequalities and injustices might be challenged and disrupted.

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