

Perspectives on Henri Lefebvre

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Perspectives on Henri Lefebvre

Theory, Practices and (Re) Readings

Edited by

Jenny Bauer and Robert Fischer

In cooperation with Sebastian Dorsch & prefaced by
Susanne Rau

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Susanne Rau

Preface

“Certains naissent de façon posthume.”¹ Some are born posthumously. Thus begins an article written for a French journal by Stuart Elden, a British political scientist and geographer and translator of the *Éléments de rythmanalyse* (1992) into English (2013). There have, in fact, been a series of works, new editions, and translations appearing only after Henri Lefebvre’s death in 1991. Yet as I will show in what follows, it would be somewhat one-sided to reduce Lefebvre’s (literary) afterlife to these publications alone, or to see, in his afterlife alone, his significance for and influence on the social sciences and cultural studies.

These lines are occasioned by this publication: a series of contributions on the “theory and application” of Lefebvre in the cultural studies that originated in the context of Lefebvre workshops in Erfurt (2014), Darmstadt (2015), and Basel (2017). The project was held together, above all, by Jenny Bauer (Kassel) and Robert Fischer (Erfurt) and was initiated in cooperation with Erfurt Spatio-Temporal Studies.² The volume reflects what has been evident for several years now in the German-speaking world, and not only here: an increased interest in Lefebvre’s theory of space – and this despite the fact that his main work on the theory of space, *La Production de l’espace*, has not yet been translated into German. The fascination that Lefebvre’s approach to space holds is certainly to be explained with the general spatial turn in the social sciences and cultural studies. But it must be emphasized that Lefebvre – in contrast, for example, to Michel Foucault, who is also counted among the great thinkers of space from the last century – does in fact develop a comprehensive theory and method, and that he did not just make essayistic attempts to do so. This is why part of the charm of his theory of space, which is also a critical theory of society, lies in its better applicability.

Yet this theory of space is in no way all that Lefebvre’s work has to offer. A critique of everyday life, the right to the city, dialectical materialism, and rhythm

1 Elden, Stuart. “Certains naissent de façon posthume: La survie d’Henri Lefebvre”, Élise Charon and Vincent Charbonnier (trans.). *Actuel Marx* 36:2 (2004): 181–198. The article discusses the French reception of Lefebvre since his death in 1991.

2 Several institutions contributed financially to the project: The Lehrstuhl “Geschichte und Kulturen der Räume der Neuzeit” (Erfurt University); the DFG Research Training Group “Dynamics of Space and Gender” (Universities of Kassel and Göttingen); the DFG Research Training Group “Topology of Technology” (TU Darmstadt); the Graduate School of Social Sciences (G3S) (University of Basel).

Note: Translated by Michael Thomas Taylor.

analysis are likewise terms that can be connected with Lefebvre, who was at once a philosopher, sociologist, urban theorist, and publicist. And this is the reason that the resurrected Lefebvre can today appear in different guises depending on the historical, spatial or academic context. There were also periods of time after 1991 in which – in complete contrast to today, 2018 – he had already been declared dead. In what follows, I will sketch the basis of the – constantly changing – current relevance and visibility that Lefebvre has experienced since his death, above all in France, to then engage with his reception in Germany.

1 Lefebvre's various afterlives, above all in France

In 1994, the journal *Espaces et sociétés*, founded in 1970 by Henri Lefebvre and Anatole Kopp, published a special topic issue on the “current relevance” of Henri Lefebvre. The issue was occasioned by the question of whether Lefebvre's thought remained relevant following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the failure of the workers' movement. The contributions to the issue replied in various ways that certainly emphasized Lefebvre's originality and the power of his vision. What is striking from today's perspective, however, is the editors' assertion that, only three years after his death, Lefebvre had been forgotten. The editors considered this forgetting to be evident even among the sociologists Lefebvre had taught at the universities of Strasbourg and Nanterre – exactly where, in other words, the student movement had begun and where students had learned, the editors argue, to critically question society.³ In the rest of their introduction, however, the editors also turn to Lefebvre's work to find reasons

³ Coornaert, Monique and Jean-Pierre Garnier. “Présentation: Actualités de Henri Lefebvres” *Espaces et sociétés* 76 (1994): 5–11, here 6: “Mais, avant de présenter quelques-uns des axes autour desquels s'organisent les articles [...] un point semble mériter de retenir l'attention: la désaffection dont souffre la pensée de Henri Lefebvre, aujourd'hui, alors que, décédé depuis peu (juin 1991), il n'a cessé, jusqu'au bout, d'être publié, interviewé, interpellé. Cet oubli apparaît particulièrement manifeste chez les sociologues dans le champ même de celui qui enseigna la sociologie à l'Université de Strasbourg puis de Nanterre, là où prit naissance un mouvement étudiant dont beaucoup de protagonistes avaient d'ailleurs appris dans les cours de Henri Lefebvre à ‘contester’ la société.” [“But before presenting some of the axes around which the articles are organized (...) one point seems to deserve attention: the disaffection from which the thought of Henri Lefebvre suffers today, recently deceased (June 1991), he continued, until the end, being published, interviewed, questioned. This oversight seems particularly evident among sociologists in the very place where he taught sociology, at the Universities of Strasbourg and Nanterre – the place where the student movement began and where many of that movement's leaders had learned to ‘challenge’ society in Henri Lefebvre's classes.”]

for this forgetting. First, they argue that Lefebvre's influence during his life had always been only partial; it had been frequently focused on social problems, and less so on the theoretical-methodological elements of his work. Second, they argue that many of Lefebvre's themes had been quickly popularized. In their view, researchers, practitioners, politicians, and journalists appropriated some of Lefebvre's ideas – for example, the “civilisation urbaine” – only to then decontextualize and depoliticize them, making them into clichés. And third, they suggest that several of the shortcomings and ambiguities in Lefebvre's work could themselves have contributed to a gradual turning away from his writings. It was apparent even at the time in France that there was significant interest in Lefebvre's work in the Anglo-American world, which could be traced to the translation of *La production de l'espace* – for the editors, a strangely postmodern interpretation that did not really do justice to Lefebvre in his role as a progressive intellectual.

Just four years later in 1998, another text appeared dedicated to the “current relevance” of Henri Lefebvre's thought.⁴ The spatial and urban planner Laurent Devisme saw *Le droit à la ville* (*The Right to the City*) as a leitmotiv of French urban policy from the 1990s. At the same time, he points toward the much older fact that Lefebvre's works that engage with the city were already being discussed in academic urban studies beginning at the end of the 1960s. Here we find, in other words, a gentle rebuke of the common reductions of Lefebvre and his work.⁵ But Devisme also intends to point toward the contemporary relevance of Lefebvre's thought by confronting some of its aspects with the contemporary urban reality. For Devisme, this is – in addition to the general increase in urbanization – the concept or form of centrality. Lefebvre sees the city as characterized chiefly by centrality, but this does not mean the geographic center. Centrality exists where many things come together, where intensive communication and exchange take place; it is a place of convergence, the negation of distance, and the production of simultaneity. Urban centrality can be analyzed with Lefebvre's triad: as conceived, perceived, and lived space. Or to put it differently: centrality (a form, not a content) allows urbanity to originate or, conversely, follows from urbanity.

In 2006, the geographer Jean-Yves Martin published an article guided by the idea of making Henri Lefebvre more well known, especially in French geography,

⁴ Devisme, Laurent. *Actualité de la pensée d'Henri Lefebvre à propos de l'urbain: La question de la centralité*. Tours: Maison des sciences de la ville, 1998.

⁵ Devisme, Laurent. “Lefebvre, Henri” In: *Dictionnaire de la géographie et de l'espace des sociétés*, Jacques Lévy and Michel Lussault (eds.), 546 f. Paris: Belin, 2003.

as a “spatiologue” (a scholar of space).⁶ Following a brief introduction to several concepts concerned with the theory of space (“production,” “triplicité,” and “conflictualité”) and to the dialectical method that is also important for the analysis of space, Martin examines works from contemporary geographers to show how these scholars have been inspired by Lefebvre, and also how they further develop and update his thought. We should probably consider it telling for this moment in time that all of these authors were working on different continents: Rob Shields in Canada, Edward Soja in the United States, Ana Fani Alessandri Carlos, Amélia Luísa Damiani, and Cláudio Roberto Duarte in Brazil. The author nevertheless laments that most geographers continue to work with dualities of “espace/territoire” and to pay too little attention to users of space. But Lefebvre’s understanding of space included its permanent reproduction through its use, which is also what transformed space into an “œuvre collective (générique),” meaning joint effort of all human beings.⁷

Since 2009, the tide appears to have been gradually turning. Booksellers celebrated Lefebvre as one of the greatest philosophers of the twentieth century and an author who was experiencing a worldwide rediscovery.⁸ On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of its first publication, the Éditions Economica reissued *La somme et le reste* (1959). *Le droit à la ville* (from 1968) was also published in a third edition. It should also be mentioned that an intellectual biography of Lefebvre, written by the educator Hugues Lethierry, a student of Lefebvre in Nanterre, appeared in 2009.⁹ Two years later, in the preface to another book edited by Hugues Lethierry that brought together brief contributions by various authors under the motto of “Lefebvre studies,” Andy Merrifield wrote that 2009 had been a significant year for French research into Lefebvre, who, Merrifield claimed, had until then been valued only as an export.¹⁰ However unorthodox Lethierry’s book may have been it played a highly significant role in reawakening Lefebvre’s memory in France. In another book, also published as an edited volume, Lethierry

6 Martin, Jean-Yves. “Une géographie critique de l’espace du quotidien: L’actualité mondialisée de la pensée spatiale d’Henri Lefebvre” *Journal of Urban Research* [Online] 2 (2006), online since July 17, 2006, <http://journals.openedition.org/articulo/897> (12/04/18).

7 Martin, Une géographie critique, 5.

8 See <https://www.eyrolles.com/Accueil/Auteur/henri-lefebvre-94535> (28/04/18).

9 Lethierry, Hugues. *Penser avec Henri Lefebvre: Sauver la vie et la ville?* Lyon: Chronique Sociale, 2009. In this context, we should not completely forget another of Lefebvre’s students, Rémi Hess, who wrote about his teacher even before Lefebvre died, and who has administered Lefebvre’s papers since his death, meaning he has published some of Lefebvre’s writings. See, among other things, Hess, Rémi. *Henri Lefebvre et l’aventure du siècle*. Paris: A.M. Métailié, 1988.

10 Merrifield, Andy. “Préface.” In: *Sauve qui peu la ville: Études lefebvriennes*, Hugues Lethierry (ed.), 17–23. Paris: L’Harmattan, 2001.

aims to move forward from thinking to acting.¹¹ Lethierry's political (Marxist) interest in Lefebvre is evident here, although several of the contributions show that Lefebvre's own afterlife had continued to develop in the meantime.

Since this turning point in 2009, Lefebvre has also reappeared in his home country in various guises. In 2011, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of his death, two conferences took place at the University of Nanterre: "Henri Lefebvre in Urban Studies Today: *The Right to the City*" (June 10) and "Henri Lefebvre: Thought Become World?" (September 27–28).¹² Several of the contributions to the second conference were published one year later in a special issue of the journal *L'Homme et la société*. That publication speaks of a rediscovery, without however lamenting any absence. Quite the opposite: the issue emphasizes Lefebvre's relevance today. The blurb on the cover reads: "Never has any age been as subject to managerial and technical rationality as ours. Henri Lefebvre's thought, then, has made a world appearance/has appeared as a world."¹³ This somewhat unusual formulation – "une pensée devenue/apparue monde" – is an entirely original play on words, the meaning of which only becomes clear from context: it combines the observation that Lefebvre's thought has since become known worldwide with the assertion that it also helps to understand (the problems of) today's world. I cannot precisely say how Lefebvre, who was a critical intellectual and not prone to aligning himself with mass movements, would have reacted to this claim. Still, the formulation "pensée devenue monde" essentially amounts to the highest accolade that can be given to an engaged intellectual.

In the meantime, Sylvain Sangla had also defended a geophilosophical dissertation on politics and space in Henri Lefebvre at the University of Paris 8.¹⁴ Since 2010, a transdisciplinary research platform on rhythms has existed in the sciences, philosophy, and the arts.¹⁵ This platform, primarily initiated by the philosopher Paul Michon, also indirectly follows Lefebvre's goal of transforming the analysis of rhythm into a kind of universal science in which the natural and social sciences, the humanities, and the arts come together to eventually produce a new

¹¹ Lethierry, Hugues (ed.). *Agir avec Henri Lefebvre: Altermarxiste? Géographe radical?* Lyon: Chronique Sociale, 2015.

¹² "Henri Lefebvre dans les études urbaines aujourd'hui: le droit à la ville" and "Henri Lefebvre: une pensée devenue monde?"

¹³ *L'Homme et la société* 3–4 (2012).

¹⁴ Sangla, Sylvain. *Politique et espace chez Henri Lefebvre*. Doctoral thesis. Saint Denis: Université Paris 8 Saint-Denis, 2010. Online: Bibliothèque numérique Paris 8, <http://octaviana.fr/document/152263594> (28/04/18).

¹⁵ Rhuthmos. Plateforme internationale et transdisciplinaire de recherche sur les rythmes dans les sciences, les philosophies et les arts, <https://rhuthmos.eu/> (28/04/18).

social theory. The platform contributes to this aim by inviting authors from widely diverse disciplines to participate in a dialogue about rhythms.

Lefebvre's increasing presence among the living is also evident in how his theories have trickled down into books intended as academic introductions, especially to geography and urban sociology. Jean Rémy, a long-time member of the editorial board for the journal *Espaces et sociétés*, argues in the very title of the introduction that he published in 2015 that space is a central category for sociology, essentially basing his arguments on Lefebvre's triad.¹⁶ And in Jean-Marc Stébé's brief introduction to urban sociology, which was first published in 2007 and appeared in a fifth edition in 2016, we read that Lefebvre's hypothesis is being increasingly confirmed by global urbanization.¹⁷ Although the book discusses other theoretical approaches, Lefebvre's works on space and the city appear again and again (*La révolution urbaine*, *Le droit à la ville*, *La production de l'espace*). For the fiftieth anniversary of the first edition of *Le droit à la ville*, colloquiums, public discussions, and small exhibitions took place at various locations in France (Paris City Hall, the University of Tours, the University of Paris-Est Créteil, the University of Lyon, the University of Rennes 2, the University of Paris-Nanterre, etc.). It's as if things had never been otherwise: Lefebvre, the intellectual, who can help us to find solutions for the problems of today's society.

2 Lefebvre in the German-speaking world

Thinking about Lefebvre's reception beyond the French-speaking world is not only justified by the fact that he posthumously moves among the great thinkers of space. We should also ask this question because his written legacy does not allow us to overlook the fact that he was exceptionally familiar with the writings of Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche. Moreover, he took concerned interest in Germany beginning in the 1930s and published work in France on Hitler's fascism.¹⁸ What happens, then, with these varied interests after they had been integrated into scholarship, or with Lefebvre's own ideas and concepts after they had again been passed back over to the other side of the Rhine.

The reciprocal process of this intellectual exchange of gifts, as we might call it, can be gauged first of all in the translation of Lefebvre's works into German and their – in part – very successful sales numbers.

¹⁶ Rémy, Jean. *L'espace, un objet central de la sociologie*. Toulouse: Éditions érès, 2015.

¹⁷ Stébé, Jean-Marc and Hervé Marchal. *La sociologie urbaine*. (Que sais-je?) Paris: PUF, 2016.

¹⁸ For example: Lefebvre, Henri. *Hitler au pouvoir: Les enseignements de cinq années de fascisme en Allemagne*. Paris: Bureau d'éditions, 1938.

Title	Translated by	Year published, publisher
<i>Problèmes actuels du marxisme</i>	Alfred Schmidt	1965, Suhrkamp, 6 editions through 1971: 40,000 copies sold
<i>La révolution urbaine</i>	Ulrike Roeckl Ulrike Roeckl	1972, List 1976, Syndikat 1990, Hain 2003, Dresden-Postplatz, Stephan Greene, and B-Books
<i>Sociologie de Marx</i>	Beate Rehschuh	1972, Suhrkamp
<i>Critique de la vie quotidienne</i>	Karl Held Burkhard Kroeber Burkhard Kroeber	1974, Hanser 1977, Athenäum 1987, Fischer Taschenbuch
<i>Le matérialisme dialectique</i>	Alfred Schmidt	1966, Suhrkamp, 5 editions through 1971: 36,000 copies sold
<i>La vie quotidienne dans le monde moderne</i>	Annegret Dumasy	1972, Suhrkamp
<i>Le langage et la société</i>	Erwin Stegentrift	1973, Schwann
<i>La survie du capitalisme</i>	Bernd Lächler	1974, List
<i>Métaphilosophie</i>	Burkhard Kroeber	1975, Suhrkamp
<i>La pensée marxiste et la ville</i>	Christel Leclère	1975, Otto Maier
<i>Le marxisme</i>	Beate Rehschuh	1975, Beck
<i>Introduction à la modernité: Préludes</i>	Bernd Schwibs	1978, Suhrkamp
<i>La révolution n'est plus ce qu'elle était</i>	Burkhard Kroeber	1979, Hanser
<i>Le droit à la ville</i>	Birgit Althaler	2016, Nautilus

Since the 1980s, there have been fewer translations into German, although several new editions have appeared (especially of *La révolution urbaine*). In contrast, the number of translations into English has been increasing, which is probably a sign that Lefebvre's work is starting to be received in Anglo-American sociology and human geography. This list shows, among other things, that Lefebvre has been read in the German-speaking world since at least the 1960s. This history nevertheless evinces a strange asymmetry: work translated on early topics is hardly interesting anymore today. By contrast, Lefebvre's frequently cited writings on space – with the exception of individual passages or chapters – were not translated into German, even though they were widely received, especially in cultural

studies.¹⁹ Of course here, too, we ought to ask the questions that were already raised in 1994 in the special issue of *Espaces et sociétés* on Lefebvre. A certain reticence about Lefebvre may also be explained – especially in Germany – by the Marxist influences on his theory. Yet as far as the further reception of his writings in German philosophy, sociology, and urban studies is concerned, we still lack a comprehensive analysis.

Today, Lefebvre is once again being read in the German-speaking world, including his scholarship on the city. In 2014, *La révolution urbaine* was republished in German as *Revolution der Städte* by the Europäische Verlagsanstalt. In 2015, the Viennese journal *Dérive* devoted a special issue to Lefebvre.²⁰ And in 2016, almost fifty years after *Le droit à la ville* was published in French, the book appeared for the first time in German as *Das Recht auf Stadt*.²¹ The timing of the translation can be explained by the rise of the right-to-city movements, as they exist, for example, in Hamburg. With their demands for affordable housing and more participation and dialogue to shape what happens in urban space, and in their protest marches against inner-city gentrification, these movements repeatedly refer to Lefebvre's text, even if this is not always directly evident from their websites and protest signs.²² The explicit references are nonetheless to be found in statements made by the intellectual leaders of the movements and in social science research on recent urban social movements.²³

All signs thus seem to point to a Lefebvre renaissance integrating the analysis of space and urban research. On the horizon, we can also glimpse the analysis of rhythm, in which Lefebvre saw a close collaboration between humanities, social sciences, and life sciences.²⁴ It is to this – now third – renaissance of Lefebvre studies that this volume in the series *SpatioTemporality: Practices – Concepts – Media* aims to make a contribution of its own.

19 Dorsch, Sebastian and Susanne Rau (eds.). *Historical Social Research* 38 (2013). Special Issue: "Space/Time Practices and the Production of Space and Time"; Rau, Susanne. *Räume: Konzepte, Wahrnehmungen, Praktiken*. Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 2013, 47–52, 74–80; 2nd edition 2017, 73–78.

20 Laimer, Christoph and Elke Rauth (eds.). *Dérive: Zeitschrift für Stadtforschung* 60 (2015). Special Issue: "Henri Lefebvre und das Recht auf Stadt. 15 Jahre dérive".

21 Lefebvre, Henri. *Das Recht auf Stadt*. Hamburg: Edition Nautilus, 2016.

22 Recht auf Stadt: *Netzwerk von Hamburger Initiativen für eine Stadt für alle*, <http://www.rechtaufstadt.net/> (10/05/18).

23 Boeing, Niels. *Von Wegen: Überlegungen zur freien Stadt der Zukunft*. Hamburg: Nautilus, 2015; Holm, Andrej and Dirk Gebhardt (eds.). *Initiativen für ein Recht auf Stadt: Theorie und Praxis städtischer Aneignungen*. Hamburg: VSA, 2011.

24 Schmolinsky, Sabine, Diana Hitzke and Heiner Stahl (eds.). *Taktungen und Rhythmen: Raumzeitliche Perspektiven interdisziplinär*. Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter, 2018.

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Robert Fischer and Jenny Bauer

Introducing Lefebvre

Since the onset of the spatial turn a seemingly unlimited amount of theories and concepts about spatiality have emerged or have been revisited. The theories provided by Henri Lefebvre¹ stood at the core of this development when Edward Soja popularized Lefebvre's spatial triad.² Lefebvre's spatial triad is embedded in an advanced, multisided spatial theory that is deeply concerned with questions of power and domination and seems ideal for an interdisciplinary approach. But Lefebvre's spatial triad comes with a package. His extensive oeuvre, his intricate concepts that tend to get more complicated the more you read of his works, his unconventional tone and meandering writing style, the lack of (well researched) translations which is slowly changing, his rather vague referencing methods, his unclear connection to contemporary intellectuals as well as the multiple, partly contradictory interpretation of his works in secondary literature often stand in the way of an easy access to his spatial theory.³

As ongoing doctoral candidates, we were confronted with all these difficulties. Lefebvre's concepts were appealing but somewhat inaccessible. As further studies of the literature proved unrewarding, we resorted to 'group therapy' and initiated the 'Lefebvre Reading Group' in 2014. The group would be dedicated to the close study of his texts and interdisciplinary exchange to grasp as much of an understanding about his concepts as possible. From 2014 to 2017 we organized three thematically diverse workshops. The reading group mainly focused on the interdisciplinary exchange and on the discussion of Lefebvorean terminologies that went beyond the well examined spatial triad delving into various concepts such as the residual, heterotopy and poiesis.⁴ This edition is based on these workshops. It collects the contributions and serves to further the interdisciplinary

1 See Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991 [1974].

2 See Soja, Edward W. *Postmodern Geographies. The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. London/New York: Routledge, 1989.

Christian Schmid i.e. points out that especially the spatial triad is often adopted out of its context and thus misunderstood. See Schmid, Christian. *Stadt, Raum und Gesellschaft. Henri Lefebvre und die Theorie der Produktion des Raumes*. München: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2005, 292–311.

3 For more information on the reception of Lefebvre see Susanne Rau's preface in this edition.

4 See Meyer, Philipp. "Review of Workshop: Lefebvre lesen. Plurale Zugänge zu einem vernachlässigten Raumdenker des 20. Jahrhunderts". H-Soz-u-Kult, H-Net Reviews. October, 2014. <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=42565> (21/07/18);

exchange including various fields: philosophy, literary and media studies, sociology, and history.

Without the existence of the Lefebvre reading group, the endeavor of this edition would not have been possible. At this point we would like to thank all the participants and co-organizers of the workshops who enabled us to create a trusting and productive atmosphere in order to foster the exchange of our knowledge on Lefebvre. In particular, we would like to thank Sebastian Dorsch and Susanne Rau who guided us through most of the process and helped us solve various problematic situations on the way. Concerning institutional and financial support we are in great debt especially to the Erfurt SpaceTime Research Group (Erfurt) as well as the DFG research training group Dynamics of Space and Gender (Göttingen/Kassel) and the DFG research training group Topology of Technology (Darmstadt). In this regard we also would like to thank Sciencefunding Erfurt gGmbH and Erfurter RaumZeit-Gruppe (ERZ) / Erfurt SpatioTemporal Studies Group, University of Erfurt, Germany which supported the publication of this book financially. Most importantly we are very grateful to all the contributors in this edition. Thank you very much for your patience and for sharing your insights about Lefebvre. Last but not least the editors would like to thank each other for carrying on with this project over several eventful years, pushing and supporting the other when necessary.

This edition is divided into three parts: The first part comprises articles with a strong theoretical approach. The parts two and three compile articles that seek to operationalize Lefebvre's concepts from perspectives of urban and literary spaces thus putting these concepts into practice as the title of the book suggests. The three sections deal with a diverse range of topics trying to contribute to various debates as we elaborate below.

1 Theorizing Lefebvre

As explicated in the *Preface*, the reception of Lefebvre as a philosopher takes different courses in France, in the Anglo-American area and in Germany. This section is dedicated to the examination of intellectual influences between Lefebvre and

Erfurter RaumZeit-Forschung (ERZ): "Workshop 'Raum anders denken. Die Begriffe der Raumtrias, des Residualen und der Heterotopie bei Henri Lefebvre'", May, 2015, Darmstadt. https://www.uni-erfurt.de/fileadmin/public-docs/RaumZeitForschung/Workshops/Lefebvre_Workshop_Raum_anders_denken.pdf (21/07/18);

Erfurter RaumZeit-Forschung (ERZ): "Workshop 'Everyday Poiesis – zur Platzierung des Politischen bei Lefebvre'", May, 2017, Basel". https://www.uni-erfurt.de/fileadmin/public-docs/RaumZeitForschung/Workshops/Einladung_Lefebvre_Workshop_Everyday_poeisis.pdf (21/07/18).

some of his contemporaries. **Stephan Günzel** embeds Lefebvre's theory of the production of space in a wider context of the philosophical discussion about space. He presents the philosopher Gaston Bachelard's *La poétique de l'espace* (1957) along with Lefebvre's *La production de l'espace* (1974) as the first writings within this debate that conceptualized space as a relational entity by focusing on the cultural aspects of producing space. An important difference between these two thinkers lies in the significance they ascribe to dialectics: While Lefebvre uses it as an instrument for social analysis, for Bachelard, the dialectics of space between inside and outside is constitutional. Spotlighting on different theories of space from the angel of Lefebvre's terminology of the conceptual triad, Günzel advocates a 'reflected theory of space' that is open to transdisciplinary approaches.

Another aspect of intellectual history can be seen in the (non)existent connections between Lefebvre and other leftist philosophers. Lefebvre is considered to be one of the intellectual spokesmen of the student's revolt in Paris in May 1968. As a philosopher, on the one hand Lefebvre gave much thought to German idealism (Schelling) and, as is known, to Hegel's und Marx's dialectic.⁵ It was him who introduced Marx as a theorist in France.⁶ However, on the other hand until today only very little is known about the influences Lefebvre's works might have had on intellectuals in Germany during his lifetime.⁷ Given the fact that both Lefebvre's theoretical positions and methodical conclusions show similarities to critical theory, German philosopher Helmut Fahrenbach is quite astounded that the authors associated with Frankfurt School, especially Jürgen Habermas, seemed to have ignored Lefebvre's work for the most part.⁸

In our book, **Chris O'Kane** opens this perspective on Lefebvre's social theory comparing it to Theodor Adorno's critical theory. In particular O'Kane connects Adorno's and Lefebvre's notions about Marx's critique of fetishism. Whereas Adorno uses Marx's ansatz to critique the capitalistic exchange dynamic and the constituent autonomous supraindividual social domination of contemporary

5 See Schwab, Jens Peter. *'L'Homme Total'. Die Entfremdungsproblematik im Werk von Henri Lefebvre*. Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1983, 62–70.

6 See Schwab, *'L'Homme Total'*, 10.

7 The same seems to be true for the Anglo-American reception. See Aronowitz, Stanley. "The Ignored Philosopher and Social Theorist: The Work of Henri Lefebvre" *Situations* 2:1 (2007): 133–155, here 133 f.

8 See Fahrenbach, Helmut. "Henri Lefebvres 'Metaphilosophie' der Praxis" In: *Grundlinien und Perspektiven einer Philosophie der Praxis*, Michael Grauer and Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik (eds.), 80–108. Kassel: IAG Philosophie, 1982, 82.

Ulrich Müller-Schöll is highlighting analogies between Lefebvre and Ernst Bloch. See Müller-Schöll, Ulrich. *Das System und der Rest. Kritische Theorie in der Perspektive Henri Lefebvres*. Mössingen-Talheim: Talheimer, 1999.

capitalist society, Lefebvre applies the concept to enlarge his spatial theory by an abstract space which is characterized by its commodity form and expedites the alienation of the individual in capitalist society. Combining the two authors O’Kane formulates a theory of the reproduction of neoliberal society which captures every niche of society. Even Lefebvre’s “romantic notion of humanism” – the essence of human resistance to capitalist alienation – cannot escape this development. At the same time this combined critical theory of contemporary society points to moments of possible transformation of society.

All absence of direct intellectual exchange aside, Lefebvre cannot have been nameless to German leftist discourse, as for instance he is mentioned in Hans Magnus Enzensberger’s famous essay “Baukasten zu einer Theorie der Medien”.⁹ In this socialist media theory, Enzensberger is presenting electronic media as an agent of mass consumption:

Henri Lefèbvre hat für die gegenwärtige Verfassung des Massenkonsums den Begriff des *spectacle*,¹⁰ der Schautstellung vorgeschlagen. Waren und Schaufenster, Straßenverkehr und Reklame, Kaufhaus und Signalwelt, Nachrichten und Verpackungen, Architektur und Medienproduktion rücken zu einer Totalität zusammen, zu einer permanenten Inszenierung, welche nicht nur die öffentlichen Stadtzentren, sondern auch die privaten Interieurs beherrscht.¹¹

For Enzensberger, the spectacle of consumption is giving the (false) promise to let a lack or an absence which he describes as a utopian need “nach einer Entgrenzung der Umwelt, nach einer Ästhetik, die sich nicht auf die Sphäre des ‘Kunstschönen’ beschränkt”.¹² Enzensberger’s definition of people’s “utopian need” for an art of living reminds, of course, to Lefebvre’s description of *poiesis* and of the *vécu*.

⁹ Enzensberger, Hans Magnus. “Baukasten zu einer Theorie der Medien” In: *Texte zur Medientheorie*, Günter Helmes and Werner Köster (eds.), 254–275. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2002 [1970].

¹⁰ It can be assumed that Lefebvre, in turn, did not invent the term “spectacle” originally, but that he was referring to the situationist Guy Debord’s work *La société du spectacle* (Engl. *The Society of Spectacle*) (1967).

¹¹ Enzensberger, Baukasten, 263 f.

“Henri Lefèbvre has proposed the concept of the *spectacle*, the exhibition, the show, to fit the present form of mass consumption. Goods and shop windows, traffic and advertisements, stores and the world of communications, news and packaging, architecture and media production come together from a totality, a permanent theatre, which dominates not only the public centers but also private interiors.” (Transl.: “Constituents of a Theory of the Media” In: *The New Media Reader*, Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort (eds.), 259–276. Cambridge (Mass.): The MIT Press, 2003, 268.)

¹² Enzensberger, Baukasten, 264.

“This need – it is a utopian one – [...] is the desire [...] for a breaking down environmental barriers, for an aesthetic which is not limited to the sphere of ‘the artistic.’” (Transl.: Constituents, 268)

The description of emerging capitalism's *spectacles*, the importance of commodities and the interpretation of warehouses as the 'temples' of modern society are well-known from Walter Benjamin's writings, especially from his text collection about the Parisian arcades (*Arcades Project*). In this edition, **Fernand Guelf** is comparing central thoughts about modernity in Henri Lefebvre's and Walter Benjamin's writings. Guelf shows that both authors claim that modernity's complexity leads to the moral and intellectual disorientation of the human being, and both assume, just like Enzensberger, that there is a utopian consciousness of the masses. Both writers are, although drawing different conclusions, concerned with the relation between the past, the present and the future. And for both, their critique of modernity as well as technology becomes the starting point for defining a form of revolutionary action that is inspired by the utopian theories of the French socialist philosopher Charles Fourier.

2 Applying Lefebvre: Urban Space

Thinking of Enzensberger's claim for an emancipatory use of media,¹³ **Jacob Geuder's** and **Livia Alcântara's** contribution on media-activism in Rio de Janeiro can be considered as an update of the discussion above in the digital era. In their article they examine the processes of digitalization in urban movements in Rio de Janeiro adapting Lefebvre's right to the city to disentangle the web of spaces, media and protest. Furthermore, Geuder and Alcântara look into Lefebvre's concept of centrality and apply it to the situation of media activists in Rio de Janeiro concluding that the digital practices can be seen as part of a differential centrality in the city. With Lefebvre's theoretical background they are able to take a more integrated approach of analyzing urban movements as well as prove the applicability of Lefebvre concepts to the digitalization of urban spaces.

It is not a coincidence that there are no less than three contributions especially on Brazilian urban space in this edition. Whereas the French science and humanities have been exerting a strong influence on the Brazilian intellectual scene at least since the 19th century it was Brazilian sociologist José de Souza Martins who introduced Henri Lefebvre to the scientific community in Brazil in the late 20th century.¹⁴

¹³ See Enzensberger, *Baukasten*, 265. (Transl.: *Constituents*, 269)

¹⁴ See Stanek, Łukasz. *Henri Lefebvre on Space. Architecture, Urban Research, and the Production of Theory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011, Chapter "Introduction", fn 20. However, there supposedly existed several ways of introducing Lefebvre into Brazilian

Our author **Fraya Frehse** is rooted in this sociological school that concentrates on an analysis of urban public spaces such as streets and squares looking in particular at the concepts of modernity and reappropriation of these spaces. In her article she focuses on the combination of Lefebvre's regressive-progressive method and rhythmanalysis merging the permeation of the human body in everyday life with an analysis of social transformation. This way Frehse links historical dimensions of time namely 'past', 'present' and 'future' to everyday practices of human bodies in urban space. With this methodological set Frehse takes a synchronic perspective on similarities and differences regarding pedestrians in the city of São Paulo and a diachronic perspective on the historical production concerning body behavior and the rules in public spaces. Her findings suggest a strong premodern influence on body rhythms in today's pedestrians in São Paulo which is being contradicted by modern regulatory measurements.

Whereas Frehse can build on a broad range of secondary literature on urban sociology that is based on Lefebvre, the reception of his works is still rather uncommon in other fields such as history. With the advent of the spatial turn, the interest in Lefebvre as one of the central figures has been growing since in the field of history. New works especially in the area of urban history draw on Lefebvre and certain concepts such as the right to the city or his conception of the spatial triad.¹⁵ However, the consequential application of his theory in historical research is still

society as Marie Huchzermeyer elaborated suggesting a possible adaptation of his concept of right to the city in the 1960s and 1970s. See Huchzermeyer, Marie: "Reading Lefebvre from the 'Global South'. The Legal Dimension of his Rights to the City", UHURU Seminar Series, Rhodes University, May 2015. <https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/uhuru/documents/Marie%20Huchzermeyer%20Reading%20Henri%20Lefebvre%20from%20the%20global%20south-UHURU%20Seminars%2020%20May%202015.pdf> (20/07/18).

¹⁵ This is especially the case for Germany: See Altenburg, Jan Philipp. *Machtraum Großstadt. Zur Aneignung und Kontrolle des Stadtraums in Frankfurt am Main und Philadelphia in den 1920er Jahren*. Köln: Böhlau, 2013; Fischer, Robert. *Sex im Grenzbereich – Sexualität, Devianz und Regulierung in den US-amerikanischen Grenzstädten Ciudad Juárez und El Paso, 1880–1950* [dissertation thesis, 2016, unpublished]; Klopfer, Nadine. *Die Ordnung der Stadt. Die Ordnung der Stadt – Raum und Gesellschaft in Montreal (1880–1930)*. Köln: Böhlau, 2010; Rau, Susanne. *Räume der Stadt – Eine Geschichte Lyons, 1300–1800*. Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 2014; Dorsch, Sebastian. "Urban Phenomena in São Paulo's Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Appropriating Local Spatio-Temporalities" *Tempo Social Revista da Sociologia da USP* (2019) [forthcoming].

Stanek pointed towards this situation in Germany in 2007: Stanek, Łukasz. "Methodologies and Situations of Urban Research. Re-reading Henri Lefebvre's 'The Production of Space'" *Zeithistorische Forschungen/ Studies in Contemporary History* 4:3 (2007), 461–465. Maybe the forthcoming German translation of Lefebvre's *La production de l'espace* can stimulate more

the exception.¹⁶ Research with Lefebvre outside the urban context in the discipline of history is virtually nonexistent.¹⁷ This is remarkable as Lefebvre has a distinct historical notion in his analysis with societies producing space also in a diachronic perspective. With this temporal view, Lefebvre's concept of space possesses a strong dynamic. Furthermore, Lefebvre himself wrote as a historian for example about the turmoil in Paris in 1968.¹⁸ In addition to that Lefebvre conceptually thought about history putting it into a progressive context that could ultimately lead to the overcoming of history and with it to an end of history in an age when forces of homogenization are replaced by forces of differentiation. However, an important aspect that is often times overlooked when referring to Lefebvre and his thoughts about spatiality is the aspect of time. In his final years Lefebvre sought to use the notion of rhythm to combine space and time as well as the everyday and history.¹⁹

Sebastian Dorsch explores the dissolution of supposedly separated time and space by looking into Lefebvre's concepts of appropriation through the lens of São Paulo street life. Critically Dorsch examines the definition of

research in the field: Lefebvre, Henri. *Die Produktion des Raums*, Annett Busch (trans.). Leipzig: Spectormag, 2018 [in print].

16 For example: Fischer, Robert. "Mobility and Morality at the Border. A Lefebvrian Spatio-Temporal Analysis in Early Twentieth-Century Ciudad Juárez and El Paso" *Historical Social Research* 38:3 (2013): 176–196; Hanssen, Jens. *Fin de Siecle Beirut. The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005; Martinez, Jennifer L. "Movement Methodologies and Transforming Urban Space" In: *Education and Social Change in Latin America*, Motta, Sara C. and Mike Cole (eds.), 167–184. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013; Rau, Susanne. "Rhythmusanalyse nach Lefebvre" In: *Taktungen und Rhythmen: Raumzeitliche Perspektiven interdisziplinär* Sabine Schmolinsky, Diana Hitzke and Heiner Stahl (eds.), Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter, 2018 [forthcoming]; Rau, Susanne. "The Urbanization of the Periphery. Spatio-Temporal History of Lyon since the Eighteenth Century" *Historical Social Research* 38:3 (2013): 150–175.

17 This is especially true for History in Germany. There are only few works in the English-speaking research community, for example: Middleton, Sue. *Henri Lefebvre and Education. Space, History, Theory*. London: Routledge, 2014; Borden, Iain Michael. *A Theorised History of Skateboarding, with Particular Reference to the Ideas of Henri Lefebvre*. [dissertation thesis, 1999, unpublished].

18 See Elden, Stuart. *Understanding Henri Lefebvre. Theory and the Possible*. London: Continuum, 2004, 154–157. See Lefebvre, Henri. *L'irruption de Nanterre au sommet*. Paris: Ed. Anthropos, 1968; Lefebvre, Henri: *The Explosion. Marxism and the French Upheaval*, Alfred Ehrenfeld (trans.). New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969.

19 Lefebvre, Henri. *Key Writings*, Stuart Elden, Elizabeth Lebas and Eleonore Kofman (eds./trans.). London: Continuum, 2003, chapter on History, Time and Space. See Elden, *Understanding Lefebvre*, 192–198.

appropriation in contrast to an idealized natural space that needs to be transformed in order to serve a group of people. For Lefebvre, appropriating is a spatio-temporal practice that opens a connection between a history of time and history of space. Also, Dorsch comments on Lefebvre's rather exotic examples of appropriated spaces of homes that divide urban spaces into private and public areas thus revealing a Eurocentric and modernity-centric perspective using these non-urban and non-Western spaces as examples of a romanticized non-modern past. Dorsch applies the concept of appropriation to turn of the century São Paulo and argues that immigrants to São Paulo changed public spaces in an act of appropriation and consequential reappropriation or even domination depending on the perspective of the actors. During this process partly appropriated spaces were created where humans could actually revivify their own space-time in the city.

3 Applying Lefebvre: Literary Space

Lefebvre's relational concept of space became famous with the spatial turn. But whereas it is well adapted for instance in social sciences or geography, other disciplines we mentioned above, such as history, are not very familiar with Lefebvre's theories. The same applies to literary studies. The connections with literature and other arts in Lefebvre's works may not be as obvious as his intensive preoccupation with history, but they are undoubtedly there. Still, there are few attempts to apply Lefebvre's understanding of space for the analysis of the production of fictional spaces until today.²⁰ An engagement with Lefebvre could prove fruitful for two sides: The discipline could not only broaden its repertoire of conceptualizing space by adapting Lefebvre's theory, it could also contribute to underline the "fundamental" importance of "aesthetic and cultural theory in Lefebvre's critical

20 These references may function as an incomplete overview: Fitzgerald, William and Efrassini Spentzou (eds.), *The Production of Space in Latin Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018; Schulz, Karin. "Räumliche Figuration gesellschaftlicher Praxis. Konversation und Geselligkeit bei Marcel Proust" In: *Räume und Medien in der Romania / Espaces et médias dans les cultures romanes / Spații și medii în culturile romanice*, Sabine Krause and Heide Flagner (eds.), 125–136. Hildesheim/Zürich/New York: Olms Verlag, 2018; Bauer, Jenny. *Geschlechterdiskurse um 1900. Literarische Identitätsentwürfe im Kontext deutsch-skandinavischer Raumproduktion*. Bielefeld: Transcript, 2016; Engelke, Jan. *Kulturpoetiken des Raumes. Die Verschränkung von Raum-, Text- und Kulturtheorie*. Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2009; Davidson, Ian. *Ideas of Space in Contemporary Poetry*. New York: Palgrave, 2007.

theory”.²¹ Finally, the interdisciplinary exchange between literary and cultural studies and geography might establish “a new discourse [...] whose sum is greater than its parts”.²²

It becomes obvious that applying Lefebvre for literary studies can have different meanings. In this book, it is particularly discussed how the spatial triad can be used as a tool for analyzing fictional works. **Tiziana Urbano** examines the problematization of housing projects in the GDR in the early 1980s in fiction – both in narratives and their screen adaptations. Less than treating them as sign systems, the author focuses on their significance as historical sources that can provide insight into a certain era’s culture and mentalities. Urbano uses Lefebvre’s spatial triads to underline the discrepancy between the architect’s functional perspective on socialist urban life (*conceived space*) and the restive everyday practices with which the inhabitants appropriate their neighborhood (*lived space*). It could appear that as a former member of *Parti communiste français* (PCF, French Communist Party), Lefebvre addressed his critique of totalizing spaces only to capitalist state systems. However, this assumption is not correct: “Since the 1960s Lefebvre described the post-Stalinist socialist states in the same way [...]: as bureaucratic regimes of controlled consumption, oriented toward economic growth”.²³ Urbano’s observation of the inhabitant’s alienation in the socialist city thus makes a contribution to the production of space in non-Western societies which seems to have been often overlooked by Lefebvre scholarship.

Difference is a concept Lefebvre deals with repeatedly.²⁴ In *The Production of Space*, he theorizes a differential space that is opposed to a homogenizing abstract space. Another example can be found in Lefebvre’s definition of representational spaces which encompass a clandestine element. Therefore, it suggests itself to consult his theoretical implications for the analysis of minorities. There are some approaches in Gender Studies that use Lefebvre as a theoretical background.²⁵ For similar debates in Postcolonial Studies, see **Anne Brüske’s**

21 Léger, Marc James. “Henri Lefebvre and the Moment of the Aesthetic” <http://legermj.typepad.com/blog/2011/12/henri-lefebvre-and-the-moment-of-the-aesthetic.html> (09/07/18).

22 Fraser, Benjamin. *Toward an Urban Cultural Studies. Henri Lefebvre and the Humanities*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, 3.

23 Stanek, *Lefebvre on Space*, 64.

24 See i.e. Lefebvre, Henri. *Le manifeste différentialiste*. Paris: Gallimard, 1971.

25 For an overview, see Kipfer, Stefan, Parastou Saberi and Thorben Wieditz. “Henri Lefebvre: Debates and Controversies” *Progress in Human Geography* 37:1 (2012): 115–134, here 124 f.

To name a few publications, see i.e. Bauer, *Geschlechterdiskurse*; Schuster, Nina. *Andere Räume. Soziale Praktiken der Raumproduktion von Drag Kings und Transgender*. Bielefeld: Transcript, 2010; Munroe, Jennifer. *Gender and the Garden in Early Modern English Literature*.