

Concepts are the basic building blocks of all knowledge, while the strength of the theories that guide any societal project is dependent on the quality those concepts. Contrarily, the utilization of questionable concepts will result in questionable outcomes. As two of the oldest geographical concepts still in widespread use, 'rural/urban' stand in stark contrast to the immense changes encountered by society over the last century, let alone decades. The aim of this thesis is to critically evaluate our use of the concepts 'rural/urban' in order to help erase the contagion of indifference attached to them. This work makes a case for reconfiguring our relationship with familiar conceptions of societal organization. Its principal contribution is to help facilitate decisions on whether 'rural/urban' are truly analytically contributory to a specific line of reasoning or whether they merely linger as a cultural ostinato acquired by scientifically and societally undesirable mechanisms. This compilation thesis consists of five theoretically and methodically diverse constitutive papers and an extensive summative part inspired by a much wider range of ideas. By combing insights from critical theory, cognitive psychology and STS, this eclectic work addresses the phenomenon of rural/urban thinking using a new syntax and a new argumentative narrative with the ambition to change the way that thinking is apprehended and acted upon. With a focus on performativity, constitution and implications of concepts governed by various subject positions and psychosocial factors, this work lays the groundwork for a particularly under-researched dimension of 'rural/urban' – that of the human condition – amidst an exceptionally rich conceptual literature on what 'rural/urban' "is" or "means".

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Conceptual problems and material effects

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