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Lakehead

LAW JOURNAL

Volume 6 Issue 1

Book Review

The Right to Be Rural,
Karen R. Foster & Jennifer Jarman,
Editors

Review by Jane van Moorsel



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Acknowledgements

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BOOK REVIEW

THE RIGHT TO BE RURAL

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I INTRODUCTION

In their volume *The Right to Be Rural*,¹ editors Karen R. Foster and Jennifer Jarman provide an exploratory look at the ways in which rights in rural and urban communities differ in application and outcome for people living in these communities. The text is a response to the challenges Foster and Jarman identify in rural life, including issues such as climate change, neoliberal social and economic policies, globalization, food security, sovereignty (including in the Indigenous context), migration, and job security.² The edited volume demonstrates through the diverse subject matter contained in each chapter that though these challenges exist throughout Canada—and indeed the world—they have a unique manifestation in the rural

* JD 2024, Bora Laskin Faculty of Law, Lakehead University. I would like to thank my friends and family who continually support and inspire my passion for advocating for rural people and places. I would also like to especially thank Professor Tenille Brown for all of her incredible guidance and encouragement throughout this writing and publishing process.

¹ Karen R Foster & Jennifer Jarman, eds, *The Right to Be Rural* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2022).

² *Ibid* at 2.

context. The exploration of “the right to be rural” throughout the edited volume is guided by central themes and ideas, as is described by the editors in the introductory chapter:

The chapters in this collection take up the question of the right to be rural, asking whether we can meaningfully think about rights to nature and natural resources in rural places, rural livelihoods, public services in rural and remote communities, political representation, technologies, and connectivity.³

The editors take up the language of “rights” as a way to frame the challenges felt by rural persons and communities, arguing that “because such challenges are altering the relationship between rural citizens and their states, it is time to analyze and articulate rural decline, survival, and sustainability of rights.”⁴ For the purposes of this review, the term “rurality” refers to what can be described as “rural character.”⁵

A rights framework helps to parse out rights and duties that are conferred on people in rural communities specifically because of their citizenship in said rural communities. Rather than the creation of a right to be rural conceived of as a singular right, Foster and Jarman explain that the framework is akin to the “right to the city” as is articulated by Henri Lefebvre⁶ and David Harvey.⁷ Each chapter is thus connected by the key theme of citizenship and explores how citizenship is uniquely engaged with by rural individuals, institutions, and communities.

Foster and Jarman have assembled a collection of chapters, each written by different authors, who research the experiences of rural citizens both within Canada and globally. The book is 381 pages long, consisting of 20 chapters. The central theme of citizenship as it is connected to rights and rural life is successfully explored throughout the volume from different perspectives, including but not limited to the disciplines of sociology, policy studies, history, education, political science, urban planning, and gender studies.

The volume chapters are what would primarily be described as sociolegal scholarship in nature, as they take up questions related to law, citizenship, construction of the rural, and their sociopolitical or regulatory connections. Consequently, the intended readership of the book would most likely be academics, but could also include anyone who is connected to rural life in Canada or is living, working, and interacting in rural spaces. I read this book from the perspective of someone who has lived almost exclusively in a rural community their entire life and now attends a law school that highlights the importance of small town law practice. I am deeply familiar with issues related to what are still largely underrepresented rural communities in mainstream discourse; the issues discussed in this book represent many underexplored issues between rurality and law that are present in and applicable to rural communities. Ultimately, the volume highlights rurality as an area that needs to be further explored by legal, social, gender, education, and political scholars. The question of whether there is a “right to be rural” is answered affirmatively, though there is still work to be done to move from the abstract idea to concrete rights claims.

³ *Ibid* at 5.

⁴ *Ibid* at 2.

⁵ *Collins English Dictionary*, online, *sub verbo* “rurality.”

⁶ Henri Lefebvre, *Le Droit à La Ville* (Paris: Anthropos, 1968).

⁷ David Harvey, “The Right to the City” (2003) 27:4 *Int’l J Urb & Reg Research* 939.

This book review will provide a summary of the chapters and themes that are present within the book, a discussion on gaps in the literature, and finally will comment on the book itself and where it may fall best within future areas of examination.

II THEMES: CITIZENSHIP AND RURAL LIFE

The breadth of the topics covered in the chapters of this book is notable. The diversity of subject matter means that the chapters sometimes feel slightly disconnected from those in the sections before them, yet despite this, the chapter authors and the editors have done a compelling job of providing the necessary contexts, definitions, and descriptions of the themes of rurality, citizenship, and rights.

To explore such a broad question of rurality, the editors provide a rights-based framework in their introductory chapter through which to view the subsequent chapters. The editors do not provide a description of what the confines of a rights-based framework are. Rather, they list a series of questions that the reader is able to call to mind when thinking about the content found throughout the book. Some of these questions include, “How is the right to be rural claimed, protected, and enforced?” “If citizenship rights have a spatial character, what are the implications for the principles of equity and access that underpin most legal charters and declarations, at state and international levels?”⁸ The editors suggest to the reader that such questions, and the subsequent dilemmas flowing from them, offer the framework “for studying and understanding the many demographic, social, economic, environmental, and political challenges faced by rural communities worldwide.”⁹ This interdisciplinary framework considers the rights associated with each area and, as noted, the challenges associated with implementing or accessing those rights due to the location and nature of rural communities.

The editors engage with this rights framework by examining the interaction between citizenship and rights. They argue that rights flow from the status of “citizenship” that is conferred on a person in a number of different ways.¹⁰ Citing sociologist Margaret Somers, the editors first explain rights as being legal claims that are applied as a “package” called citizenship.¹¹ It is that status of having citizenship that gives rights to people, while in return providing justification for the duties associated with said citizenship.¹² The editors go on to demonstrate how this status of citizenship is strongly linked to a person’s ability to contribute through capitalism.¹³ It is important to point out this connection to capitalism because this critical perspective runs throughout the book. The value that is placed on a person’s ability to contribute to a community through means of their labour is discussed across the chapters, often as it relates to the lack of rights afforded to rural communities when the output of labour is diminished. To demonstrate this point, the reader will see that many rural communities were often once places with thriving labour markets that have diminished over time, such as is

⁸ Foster & Jarman, *supra* note 1 at 1.

⁹ *Ibid* at 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid*.

¹¹ *Ibid*.

¹² *Ibid*.

¹³ *Ibid* at 3.

described in Chapter 5 with respect to the fishing industry in Newfoundland and Labrador.¹⁴ It is as resources and sources of labour diminish that rural communities may begin to see a deterioration in the way their inhabitants experience the rights afforded to them through the nature of citizenship. The less work there is, the fewer people there are working, and those that do remain, even if they are working, are “placed among contractual malfeasants and denied the full rights of citizenship, by virtue of where they live.”¹⁵

Interestingly, the editors do not provide a structured definition of what “rural” is intended to mean throughout the book, only briefly describing “rural” as “small, peripheral communities outside urban zones.”¹⁶ Instead, the editors leave the work of defining what “rural” means to the individual chapter authors. Many of the authors use detailed descriptions of things such as the geography of the study location, the population of the area, or the type of industry that exists in that community, rather than giving a set definition of what terms such as “rural” or “rights” mean. These descriptions provide the central context of rurality necessary for the reader, which is that rural communities are as unique and diverse as urban communities are (which have received much more attention in like literature). I think it is a highlight of the book that the authors are given the opportunity to describe rural communities in a way that captured the nuance of the individual communities studied.

The themes are explored in a consistent yet novel manner in each individual chapter, adding greatly to the flow of the book. The choice of the editors to have each of the authors provide their own standpoints on the themes of the book—particularly rurality, rights, and citizenship—brought forward some of the many characteristics that shape the intersection of rural living, policy, accessibility, and the law.

III CHAPTER SUMMARY

The first chapter sees Karen R Foster and Jennifer Jarman provide their own overview of the book, indicating what readers can expect with respect to the individual chapters, detailing the reasons for their interest in compiling this book, discussing the themes they and the contributing authors see as running through the chapters, and finally distinguishing what questions they hope to explore throughout the book.¹⁷ The book is then split into six parts based on the central theme.

A. The Right to Rural Education

Chapter 2, written by Katie MacLeod, explores “the intersections of rural and linguistic minority rights to demonstrate how state interests can both benefit and work against the efforts of a community at the local level” through a case study the author conducted in Pomquet, Nova Scotia.¹⁸ This chapter provides an excellent demonstration of the diversity

¹⁴ *Ibid* at 53.

¹⁵ *Ibid* at 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid* at 5.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, ch 1.

¹⁸ Katie K MacLeod, “The Right to Language in Rural Nova Scotia, Canada” in Foster & Jarman, *supra* note 1 at 20.

that exists even within incredibly small communities, providing perspective to readers who may perceive rural communities to be largely homogenous. In contrast, Chapter 3, written by Laura Domingo-Peñañiel, Laura Farré-Riera, and Núria Simó-Gil, supplies the reader with a comparison of three different Catalan secondary schools in Spain.¹⁹ They focus on how rural education contexts may contribute to the learning of citizenship, specifically how it may open new ways to achieve democracy and participation within the school.²⁰ The authors conclude that it is through democratic experiences that citizenship is learned, and this is done specifically through service learning projects that students engaged in with their communities.²¹

The final chapter in Part I looks at a somewhat novel issue—the phenomenon of fake news and problematic social media content among students.²² Through participant observation and in-depth interviews, author Ario Seto conducted ethnographic research at several schools on the Burin Peninsula in Newfoundland and Labrador. Seto discusses the challenges faced by rural students and teachers when engaging with critical citizenship education inside and outside the classroom, considering the rising circulation of problematic online content.²³ In the conclusion, the author notes that rural communities face particular vulnerabilities because of the limited access to resources aimed at supporting students’ learning about social and civic skills.²⁴ It would be interesting to learn if findings would be different in 2024, given how much has changed with social media and content creation since the time the study was completed in 2018 and 2019.

B. The Right to Rural Livelihoods

Only two chapters are included to address this topic, yet the editors chose chapters that reflect the diversity of experiences in rural livelihood well. The two chapters explore the experiences of rural people, globally, trying to sustain themselves as citizens in their communities and their right to do so. Chapter 5, written by Gregory Hadley, is set in rural Nova Scotia and focuses on the trend of school closures in rural Canadian communities.²⁵ In particular, it addresses what effect these closures will have on the students who have fewer educational opportunities, the increase in outmigration caused by urban-centric curriculums teaching students to “learn to leave,” and the ultimate impact this has for the right to be a citizen in a rural community. These issues pertain to what Hadley calls “matters of rural social stability and vitality.”²⁶ This concept is also drawn on in Chapter 6, although it is from the experience of small-scale fishers living in Chilika Lagoon, India. In that chapter, the author, Pallavi Das, explores the impact that capital accumulation and the market economy play on

¹⁹ Laura Domingo-Peñañiel, Laura Farré-Riera, & Núria Simó-Gil, “Experiencing an Active Citizenship: Democratic and Inclusive Practices in Three Rural Secondary Schools in Spain” in Foster & Jarman, *supra* note 1 at 35–50.

²⁰ *Ibid* at 35.

²¹ *Ibid* at 36.

²² Ario Seto, “Hallway Pedagogy and Resource Loss: Countering Fake News in Rural Canadian Schools” in Foster & Jarman, *supra* note 1 at 51–68.

²³ *Ibid* at 51.

²⁴ *Ibid* at 64.

²⁵ Gregory RL Hadley, “Stemming the Tide: Youth Entrepreneurial Citizenship in Rural Nova Scotia, Canada” in Foster & Jarman, *supra* note 1 at 71–90.

²⁶ *Ibid* at 72.

the lives of rural people that rely on natural resources, such as waterways and fish, for their livelihoods.²⁷ Like the previous chapter, Das highlights the pattern of rural people necessarily leaving their rural communities in search of what they perceive to be better opportunities in urban centres due to the influx of urban-centric practices.²⁸

C. The Right to Rural Health

The first chapter in this section, written by Sarah Rudrum, Lesley Frank, and Kayla McCarney, addresses the barriers related to birthing and maternity care in rural Canada. The premise of this chapter is that “[w]ithout accessible maternity care in rural areas, women experience the right to be rural as contingent or under threat.”²⁹ The authors conclude that aside from immigration and migration growing communities, pregnancy, birth, and parenting are literal reproductions of society, and the right to give birth in a rural community is central to maintaining the right to be a rural citizen more broadly.³⁰ Chapter 8 switches focus and takes a look at rural food, specifically the rights and remedies for older persons in Canada in relation to food security.³¹ Authors Kathleen Kevany and Al Lauzon frame “older persons’ food security and insecurity as components of the right to be rural”³² and conclude on the critical point that people cannot live where they cannot eat, and policy in Canada must reflect this.³³ The editors conclude this part by once again incorporating an international perspective, this time on conceptions of home amongst what authors Katja Rinne-Koski and Sulevi Riukulehto deem “third age residents” living in rural Finland.³⁴ In this chapter Rinne-Koski and Riukulehto frame citizenship as strongly connected to a place and relational interactions.³⁵ The findings of their study suggest that encouraging a sense of belonging will be key to developing sustainable rural housing and fostering the right to be rural.³⁶

D. The Right to Rural Representation

In Chapter 10, Ilona Matysiak examines patterns of local civic engagement among young university graduates living in rural areas of Poland.³⁷ In her words, “the chapter aims to explore whether these young university graduates, as citizens, use their resources in terms of

²⁷ Pallavi V Das, “Dispossession, Environmental Degradation, and the Right to Be Rural” in Foster & Jarman, *supra* note 1 at 91–106.

²⁸ *Ibid* at 102.

²⁹ Sarah Rudrum, Lesley Frank, and Kayla McCarney, “Reproducing the Rural Citizen: Barriers to Rural Birthing and Maternity Care in Canada” in Foster & Jarman, *supra* note 1 at 107–122.

³⁰ *Ibid* at 120.

³¹ Kathleen Kevany & Al Lauzon, “Rural Food: Rights and Remedies for Older Persons in Canada” in Foster & Jarman, *supra* note 1 at 123–140.

³² *Ibid* at 123.

³³ *Ibid* at 134.

³⁴ Katja Rinne-Koski & Sulevi Riukulehto, “The Multifaceted Sense of Belonging: Discursive Conceptions of Home by Third Age Residents in Rural Finland” in Foster & Jarman, *supra* note 1 at 141–156.

³⁵ *Ibid* at 141.

³⁶ *Ibid* at 154.

³⁷ Ilona Matysiak, “Citizens or Individuals? Patterns of Local Civic Engagement of Young University Graduates Living in Rural Areas in Poland” in Foster & Jarman, *supra* note 1 at 159–176.

education and skills for the benefit of their villages.”³⁸ This chapter is reminiscent of Chapter 5 in that it too looks at opportunities for young, educated people to work and remain in their home communities. But in contrast, Matysiak determines that individuality is one of the major forces driving weakened citizenship in these rural communities. Chapter 11 brings the reader back to Atlantic Canada where authors Rachel McLay and Howard Ramos frame citizenship through politics, values, and practices and compare them across urban and rural people.³⁹ The authors found that there is no evidence to suggest that social conservatism in Atlantic Canada’s rural areas is linked to increased political activity, and in fact that rural participants with more progressive values actually reported the highest rates of political participation.⁴⁰ The final chapter in Part IV is the only chapter in the book that discusses citizenship through an Indigenous lens.⁴¹ The chapter, written by Satenia Zimmermann, Sara Teitelbaum, Jennifer Jarman, and Peggy Smith, centres on Indigenous peoples’ right to self-determination and the conflict that this constitutionally protected right is in when it comes up against the idea of Canadian citizenship.⁴² The authors state that to reconcile this issue, citizenship must be approached with an allowance for the recognition of the right to self-determination and Canadian citizenship as being distinct from and, at the same time, parallel to this right.⁴³

E. The Right to Rural Policy

Starting with Chapter 13, Ray Bollman writes on Canadian public policy from a rural perspective, specifically within a framework of analyzing rights, rurality, and access to services using health policy and the delivery of health services as a local patient.⁴⁴ Bollman analyzes policy respecting the geospatial dimensions of rurality, such as distance-to-density, and concludes that rural policy needs to reflect an attention to the density of the targeted policy areas.⁴⁵ Chapter 14, written by Jeofrey Matai and Innocent Chirisa, brings the reader to rural Zimbabwe and a discussion of the role that spatial planning has as a way to protect the right to be rural.⁴⁶ The chapter posits that spatial planning can be used as a comprehensive approach to developing both urban and rural areas to eliminate bias in development, thus safeguarding the citizenship of people in rural communities.⁴⁷

³⁸ *Ibid* at 160.

³⁹ Rachel McLay & Howard Ramos, “Beyond the ‘Rural Problem’: Comparing Urban and Rural Political Citizenship, Values, and Practices in Atlantic Canada” in Foster & Jarman, *supra* note 1 at 177–192.

⁴⁰ *Ibid* at 188.

⁴¹ Satenia Zimmerman, Sara Teitelbaum, Jennifer Jarman, & MA (Peggy) Smith, “Defining Indigenous Citizenship: Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), the Right to Self-Determination, and Canadian Citizenship” in Foster & Jarman, *supra* note 1 at 193–207.

⁴² *Ibid*.

⁴³ *Ibid* at 204.

⁴⁴ Ray D Bollman, “Density Matters and Distance Matters: Canadian Public Policy from a Rural Perspective” in Foster & Jarman, *supra* note 1 at 211–236.

⁴⁵ *Ibid* at 228.

⁴⁶ Jeofrey Matai & Innocent Chirisa, “Rural Citizenship under the Impact of Rural Transformation: Unpacking the Role of Spatial Planning in Protecting the Right to be Rural in Zimbabwe” in Foster & Jarman, *supra* note 1 at 237–252.

⁴⁷ *Ibid* at 250.

Chapter 15, written by Ashleigh Weeden, deals with the right to multiple futures in the wake of smart city movements in Canada, arguing that rural areas have an opportunity to “be thoughtful about the way technology is invited into the public domain.”⁴⁸ The author leaves the reader with a number of questions to consider moving forward with respect to striking a balance between the right to rural citizenship and the ways that the future of digital infrastructure will be required to meet the demands of the contemporary economy.⁴⁹ The final chapter in the section, authored by Eshetayehu Kinfu and Logan Cochrane, discusses the regularization and urbanization of rural land in Ethiopia.⁵⁰ Two distinct issues are brought forward: that accumulation of land by dispossession at the hands of the state does not consider the rights of rural residents, and that rural residents have the tools to resist and counteract these processes.⁵¹

F. The Right to Rural Mobility

Beginning with Chapter 17, author Stacey Haugen explores rural citizenship through displacement—namely, through analyzing citizenship within the context of refugee resettlement and integration in rural Canadian communities.⁵² Haugen argues that “many of the challenges and barriers that newcomers face when attempting to access their social citizenship rights in rural and smaller communities are inherent to life in rural Canada today” and that without this understanding, everyone living in rural Canada will continue to face the difficulties associated with underfunding and disappearing social services.⁵³ Chapter 18 then transitions to local politics of inclusion and exclusion through an exploration of migrant labourers and their descendants following land reform in rural Zimbabwe.⁵⁴ The authors of the chapter, Clement Chipenda and Tom Tom, argue for a nuanced approach moving forward that focuses on achievement, opportunity, challenges, and prospects to frame the politics of inclusion and exclusion that are used to reduce social, political, and civil rights as well as the benefits of migrant labourers.⁵⁵ The final chapter in the book before the editors’ concluding chapter is written by Jens Kaae Fisker, Annette Aagaard Thuesen, and Egon Bjørnshave Noe. The chapter centres on the Danish housing market and uses an analytical framework to understand spatial

⁴⁸ S. Ashleigh Weeden, “The Right to Multiple Futures in the Shadow of Canada’s Smart City Movement” in Foster & Jarman, *supra* note 1 at 253.

⁴⁹ *Ibid* at 264.

⁵⁰ Eshetayehu Kinfu & Logan Cochrane, “‘What Makes our Land Illegal?’ Regularization and the Urbanization of Rural Land in Ethiopia” in Foster & Jarman, *supra* note 1 at 271–286.

⁵¹ *Ibid* at 283.

⁵² Stacey Haugen, “Exploring Rural Citizenship through Displacement: An Analysis of Citizenship in the Context of Refugee Resettlement and Integration in Rural Canada” in Foster & Jarman, *supra* note 1 at 289–302.

⁵³ *Ibid* at 301.

⁵⁴ Clement Chipenda & Tom Tom, “Local Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion: Exploring the Situation of Migrant Labourers and Their Descendants after Land Reform in Rural Zimbabwe” in Foster & Jarman, *supra* note 1 at 303–320.

⁵⁵ *Ibid* at 316.

injustice by specifically discussing how people who want to live in rural areas are being denied the chance to do so.⁵⁶

The final chapter in the book is written by the editors, Jennifer Jarman and Karen Foster, and asks, “what’s next for the right to be rural?”⁵⁷ They discuss the enthusiasm and positive response they received about embarking on this project and all of the interest from researchers working in such diverse subject matter areas.⁵⁸ They also return to the central question of the book, “Is there a right to be rural?” They remark that the authors in this book are “suggesting that a right to be rural means more than just the freedom to inhabit a place outside the city.”⁵⁹ The editors also provide their own summaries of each section of the book and conclude with the assertion that this book is a comprehensive start to “fleshing out what the right to be rural looks like on the ground.”⁶⁰

IV Futures in Rurality and the Law

The chapters in this book highlight the dearth of attention given to rural issues in Canada and globally, and thus reveals future avenues for reflection. First, while the book is largely focused on Canadian jurisdictions, there are also many chapters written in international settings. As my perspective is that of a rural Canadian and as someone who will likely practice law in rural Canada, it would be great to see a book in the future set entirely within and across Canada. As of 2021, one in five Canadians live in a rural community, communities that represent 98 per cent of the country’s landmass.⁶¹ With that said, rurality is a distinct feature of many parts of the country, and the diversity from one rural community to another cannot be ignored. Additionally, many of the chapters in *The Right to Be Rural* were set in eastern or Atlantic Canada. This is not so much a criticism of the book, but rather a comment that this geographic focus presents an opportunity for future students, legal practitioners, and researchers to consider rural communities across all provinces and territories in Canada.

Second, *The Right to Be Rural* also includes one chapter that is centred on the experience of Indigenous peoples in Canada. In Chapter 12, Satenia Zimmerman, Sara Tetelbaum, Jennifer Jarman, and Peggy Smith provide an interesting view into how settler colonialism shapes so many of the rights that are afforded to Canadians.⁶² Yet there are huge discrepancies between settler colonial communities and the Indigenous communities in Canada when it comes to accessing and exercising rights. In line with the inclusion of more Canadian literature, a future area for expansion would be on the inclusion of more Indigenous discourse and perspectives,

⁵⁶ Jens Kaae Fisker, Annette Aagaard Thuesen, and Egon Bjørnshave Noe, “Rural Redlining in the Danish Housing Market: Toward an Analytical Framework for Understanding Spatial (In)justice” in Foster & Jarman, *supra* note 1 at 321–338.

⁵⁷ Jennifer Jarman & Karen R Foster, “What’s Next for the Right to Be Rural?” in Foster & Jarman, *supra* note 1 at 339–349.

⁵⁸ *Ibid* at 339.

⁵⁹ *Ibid* at 343.

⁶⁰ *Ibid* at 349.

⁶¹ Infrastructure Canada, “Canada’s Rural Economic Development Strategy: Progress Report, August 2021,” online: <<https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/rural/sites/default/files/documents/2022-03/rural-strat-august-2021-aout-eng.pdf>>.

⁶² Zimmerman et al, *supra* note 41.

especially as it relates to the framework of rights and the interactions of those rights as they come to bear on citizenship. Call to Action 65 from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada calls upon the government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, post-secondary institutions, and educators, to establish a research program with multi-year funding to advance an understanding of reconciliation.⁶³ It is of the utmost importance to recognize that many of the Indigenous communities in Canada are located in rural and remote locations, and to be effective, the steps taken toward reconciliation must take into account the rurality of the large number of Indigenous communities in Canada and North America. Call to Action 65 presents the legal and sociological fields of academia with an opportunity to highlight and learn more about the particular issues affecting rural and remote Indigenous communities, and books like *The Right to Be Rural* are where the knowledge acquired can be shared for future students, communities, and researchers to learn from.

Finally, the text does not provide a detailed and definitive description of what exactly the “right to be rural” is. No doubt this lack of detail is the result of a specific choice made by the editors to highlight the citizen-centred approach to creating the rural, which in turn is considered from an interdisciplinary perspective grouped around subject matter concerns (such as health, education, representation, etc.). Through this multifaceted examination, the authors collectively create a detailed account of the variability in rural spaces and reject a binary understanding of rural versus urban. As noted earlier in this review under the discussion of themes, the editors do not provide a definition of what a rights-based framework truly represents to them. Writing as a law student and future lawyer, a more succinct definition on “the right to be rural” would be useful to understand how these rights might manifest in legal claims.

My law school, Bora Laskin Faculty of Law at Lakehead University, boasts three curriculum mandates, one being a focus on small town/sole practitioner law. This particular mandate is one of the main reasons that students from rural communities, such as myself, are interested in studying here. Law schools such as the Bora Laskin Faculty of Law are a great example of how the academic sphere can encourage more interest in rurality, how legal concerns manifest in the rural context, and the importance of that context. Having the ability to read and access books such as *The Right to Be Rural* is a helpful tool for exploring legal issues in a rural setting.

V CONCLUSION

The Right to Be Rural is a comprehensive introduction to many of the sociolegal issues that rural communities and individuals are faced with in Canada and worldwide. As such, I would highly recommend this book for an academic audience because of its appeal to several academic disciplines. As mentioned, the book would be best described as sociolegal, not strictly legal, but there are also themes of economics, psychology, urban planning, and more. The organizational structure of having six sections that tackle different aspects of rurality and rights provides structure to the different themes of the book and would be helpful for locating

⁶³ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Calls to Action* (2015), online: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/indigenous-people/aboriginal-peoples-documents/calls_to_action_english2.pdf>.

content based on fields of study—for example, the three chapters on health may be of interest to rural healthcare practitioners.

The book should be of particular interest to legal and sociological academics and researchers, and especially those with an interest in rights-based concerns viewed from a contextual perspective. With the starting points of an introduction to a rights-based framework, lawyers and future lawyers are the exact group of people who would benefit from thinking about and researching further on the theory and practical application of rights in rural communities; my own life experience and desire to practice in my own rural community is a perfect example of the purpose of this book in action. This edited volume demonstrates the importance of prioritizing research focused on making rural communities more liveable and sustainable in the long term by growing and maintaining the population of young people who call rural communities home and trying to prevent outmigration.

