



Owning the Earth: The Transforming History of Land Ownership

Andro Linklater

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Barely two centuries ago, most of the world's productive land still belonged either communally to traditional societies or to the higher powers of monarch or church. But that pattern, and the ways of life that went with it, were consigned to history by, Andro Linklater persuasively argues, the most creative and at the same time destructive cultural force in the modern era-the idea of individual, exclusive ownership of land.

Spreading from both shores of the north Atlantic, it laid waste to traditional communal civilizations, displacing entire peoples from their homelands, but at the same time brought into being a unique concept of individual freedom and a distinct form of representative government and democratic institutions. By contrast, as Linklater demonstrates, other great civilizations, in Russia, China, and the Islamic world, evolved very different structures of land ownership and thus very different forms of government and social responsibility.

The history and evolution of landownership is a fascinating chronicle in the history of civilization, offering unexpected insights about how various forms of democracy and capitalism developed, as well as a revealing analysis of a future where the Earth must sustain nine billion lives. Seen through the eyes of remarkable individuals-Chinese emperors; German peasants; the seventeenth century English surveyor William Petty, who first saw the connection between private property and free-market capitalism; the American radical Wolf Ladejinsky, whose land redistribution in Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea after WWII made possible the emergence of Asian tiger economies-*Owning the Earth* presents a radically new view of mankind's place on the planet.

Owning the Earth: The Transforming History of Land Ownership Details

Date : Published November 12th 2013 by Bloomsbury USA

ISBN : 9781620402894

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Format : Hardcover 496 pages

Genre : History, Economics, Nonfiction, Politics, Cities, Urban Planning

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Andro Linklater

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Can Iban says

Easy to read. Comprehensive content.

Recommended for those who are interested in Social Sciences, not for engineers.

Too much "British".

Ian Kloester says

A fascinating look at world history through the lens of land ownership and its impact on world political structures and people generally. I can't think of another book I've read that connects all the dots of (my fragmented knowledge of) world history so convincingly. The author started out trying to explain the crash on wall street and eventually realises that land ownership - or lack of it - is the catalyst for much of the worlds progress and conflict. To me, it's well written, well researched, and amazingly insightful. A unique perspective and - on the whole - a seemingly balanced approach. It doesn't feel agenda driven, though he certainly leans towards the earth being for all, more than the few. But who can truly argue otherwise? It traverses the globe and the centuries with more ease than I thought possible. I've read Capital and valued the experience and the empirical arguments, but this... this is far more accessible, far more enjoyable to read, and far more enlightening. I feel like I understand why this crazy world is like it is a little bit better than I did before I read it. Another keeper. This is one for the home library.

James Giddings says

This book is full of wonderful insights into the way land ownership has shaped the history of nations and the world.

Jagati Bagchi says

If you want to understand the crisis of the modern world ranging from politics to environment, this book gives an insight unparalleled and help to come to an opinion about the plight of the so called common people. Along with is inter-weaved the reasons of migration and refugees

Jordan says

Absolutely best book I've read in a long time. Thoroughly researched and documented, clearly and concisely written. Readable at high school level or above and should be mandatory for anyone in the fields of economics, finance or land management.

Jim Manis says

Ranks with Piketty's "Capital" as a must read. Traces the effects of property ownership on human culture over the past 500 years.

The book is dense with information and is meant for an audience above the 12th grade reading level. But does not require a degree in either history or economics.

Linklater says that he started the book in 2009 in an attempt to come to terms with the financial collapse of 2007-8, but by the time he published in 2013 he was as current as today's New York Times.

Nicklas Karlsson says

Sometimes you really can tell that what you are reading is just a tip of the iceberg of knowledge. Andro has managed to convince me that a big part of social history is very connected to the way land was owned.

A very important book.

Bruce Hunter says

I really wanted to like this book. I was digging the history of the world through the lens of ownership of private property... but in the end the detail obscured the message. I lost the plot about a third of the way through...

Infinidimincorp says

It's very rare I drop a 5* review. But oh my goodness. I feel like every few pages Linklater manages to open my eyes to some new facet of global history. Writing with a powerful political neutrality, Linklater's work is readable, verging only very occasionally on the poetic, and comprehensively footnoted.

As Linklater explains, so much history of the world becomes a history of economics, and economics is measured fundamentally in growth. But the land, and the simple question of how it is owned and by whom, paints a picture of history and the future that may be imperative to our understanding.

As a work so incredibly wide in scope, there are obviously some sections that felt painfully short. The Russian Revolution in particular seemed almost cursory in how it was handled. But it's hard to complain when there's so much amazing stuff in here.

A book that has changed how I feel about the world.

Bob Duke says

Well worth reading but hardline libertarians who place a primacy on private property rather than issues of justice and fairness will have objections. The author explains how the private ownership has had a transformational role on society and social relations. Various issues have stood out for me. Having lived in South Korea for a number of years and seen how that nation is a prosperous capitalist economy I was interested about the post war land redistribution that took place. Linklater argues that this formed the social stability that provided prosperity and democracy. This runs very much counter to the views of Ludwig Von Mises and others of the Austrian school who do not care about social justice issues and held that redistribution of property was the foundation of economic ruin and tyranny. Mention is made of Wolf Ladejinsky whose ideas of land reform were instrumental in Taiwan and South Korea and unfortunately not implemented in Vietnam. Intellectual property is mentioned at the end of the book and is quite provocative.

James Elder says

An unusual one this: a history of the various ways that land (and the right to till it) has been owned through human history, and the effects that this has had on government, the economy and the law. This is a subject I've long been interested in and I was a pleased to find a book on it. I learned a great deal.

Sadly, I understand that Andro Linklater died shortly after completing it.

!Tæmbu?u says

KOBOBOOKS

Reviewed by The Independent (5 Feb 2014)

Amir says

The historical and political context of this book are breathtaking, though he occasionally allows the obvious neo-Marxist approach to glide over uncomfortable facts and gaping questions.

At the same time the perspective he offers is far from being antiquated- using the newest academic instruments to make the oldest point. Last is the fluency: though this may not seem the grandest of claims, the flourish and fascination with which he writes transcend the potentially dull subject of land ownership and turn it into a page turning voyage through both time and geography.

Robert Wechsler says

An excellent history of a topic that is usually considered secondary, but which Linklater argues is far more

primary to much of history. The emphasis is on the relationship of land ownership and land reform to democracy and social justice, but there is also a lot about the views of various cultures on land ownership and about the taking of land from aboriginal people who held it communally by cultures that focus on individual land ownership.

Linklater shows that even today, when agriculture is a relatively small part of advanced economies, the 2008 crash came out of the treatment of real property as an investment vehicle no different from stocks and bonds. As for the future, the huge purchases of land in Africa and Latin America for investment purposes is bound to make a difference there.

There were times when I felt Linklater was stretching his argument a bit, but they were few.

Eric Pecile says

A decent book on the evolution of land ownership and how it contributes to the organization of society, its institutions and its economy. The beginning of the book is a little rough with pre-modern patterns of land ownership described using broad generalizations. However, as one goes on, the level of detail increases and the picture the author is trying to paint really starts to come through with clarity.
