

REVIEW

Urban Ruralities. A Geographical Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Usually rural geography has associated the city and the countryside in a binary and unequal way. The city concentrates power and draws the domain in terms of material and representation. In this way urban ruralities have had a minor consideration and have been left in the shadow in the field of rural geography. In the present contribution, three geographic research areas of new urban ruralities are proposed, above all in the global north: individual urban rurality, embedded urban rurality or garden rurality and edge rurality.

1. Introduction

The urban-rural binary relationship that has traditionally dominated the evolution of rural geography (and human geography itself) assigned a secondary and dependent role to the rural world with respect to the urban, has given way to hybrid and flexible approaches to the study of the rural and urban worlds. From this perspective, it is possible to conceptualize the different dimensions of urban ruralities as an example of the current analytical complexity that rural geography must integrate. This complexity also implies a change of perspective from metanarratives to micronarratives, where

subjectivity is notable for the interpretation of micro situations. In this case, the urban and rural (meta) positionality would not be categories of study, but urban micro rurality, linked to individual behaviors and rural micro-narratives in urban worlds. As suggested by Williams^[1], country and city are contrasted ways of life, where it is possible to build specific histories of country and city. The idea of the city is the future and the idea of the country is the past. The rural in urban worlds are minority and fragmentary, and can usually constitute invisible realities, but they emerge in differentiated forms in a spontaneous, or even officialized manner.

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Lacour, C. and Puissant, S.^[2] suggest that rurality and urbanity can be social constructions and, in this sense, it is possible to pose the death of the city and the end of rural lifestyle. Woods^[3] argues that urban rurality has been a topic rarely addressed in geographical literature, but that it can be considered from different perspectives: (1) the presence of (ex) rural populations in the city, something very common still in southern European countries, which transfer their traditions from their areas of origin to the cities; (2) the incorporation of the rural landscape into the city; (3) the creation of agrarian spaces in the city; (4) the generation of a rural iconography for urban consumption; and (5) the current urbanization process would be a double process of urbanization of the countryside and ruralization of the city.

This conceptualization of rural worlds in cities, of the ruralization of the cities, can be developed, in a synthetic way, from three perspectives: (a) a domestic, daily and individual perspective, (b) from a micro spatial perspective, associated with the appearance of small agrarian worlds between urban realities, and (c) from the point of view of border ruralities and (dis) encounter with the urban world. The purpose of this contribution is to conceptualize these three perspectives, from a hybrid and flexible vision that avoids a polarized and unequal vision of the rural and urban categories.

2. Urban Ruralities

The emergence of urban ruralities as has been pointed out has been a subject in the shadows due mainly to the strength of rural-urban and local-global binary relations that have been used within rural geography to explain the processes of transformation and change of rural areas. To explain these processes, it was necessary to separate the rural from the urban, as two realities (material and social -ways of life) differentiated and unequal both in the representation and in relation to power relations. Modernity and pastoralism promoted the differentiation of the countryside^[4] with respect to the urban world or within the rural world by (global) processes that had a different regionalization in rural (differentiated) spaces. The rural has a vision through urban eyes. Rural differentiation acquires meaning from the city. There exists an 'unequal interaction between country and city'^[1], since 'the city ordinarily concentrates the real and economic processes of the whole of society'.^[1] But, rebalancing the urban and rural world is to admit that they are comparable and porous realities. This point of view has been explored mainly through studies on rural gentrification or counterurbanization, which underlies the urban point of view, by putting the accent on migrants of urban origin and urban values and aspirations

that are combined locally with populations, values and rural aspirations. Counterurbanization is traditionally one of the thematic axes of studies on rural change since the 1990s^[5], but social change is about traditional rural societies. In the reports of Progress in Human Geography on rural geography, the focus appears linked to the (global) processes in rural spaces or to the social (rural) dynamics of urban origin exurban in rural spaces-. It seems, therefore, that it is necessary to insist on urban ruralities, in order to contribute to equating rurality and urbanity, as two hybrid realities.

In this double direction that has marked rural studies, interaction and differentiation, between the rural and the urban, the countryside and the city, we have chosen the path of fluid connections through three urban ruralities:

2.1 Individual Rurality in the City

Rurality at home dwelling of urban-rural dwellers, and urban immigrants not adapted to life in the city, who also live seasonally in their urban centers of origin.^[3] It is a nostalgic rurality, parallel to a maladjustment to the environment. A medium where the community is essentially opaque, in front of the known community of the people.^[1] A rurality that is evoked daily from the daily mobility to the decoration of the house. The individual evokes ideas and personal experiences of rural spaces. The (forced) migration to the city in a context very different from the rural one, especially in countries of late rural exodus, where many urban citizens were born in rural areas and grew up in their town. Each individual traces specific histories of country and city.^[1] These rural citizens can have daily ruralistic behaviors that evoke daily patterns that they maintained in their village (e.g. long walks through open spaces, meetings with other former rural people in urban pilgrimages, many of a regional type ...), as well as a continuous return to the town of origin, to 'your' environment. In this way, country and city would be active and continuous stories, ideas and experiences, situations of power in a wider system: 'The life of country and city is moving and present: moving in time, through the history of a family and a people; moving in feeling and ideas, through a network of relationships and decisions'^[1] (p.11). In many qualitative researches about people who live in rural areas, but who have had episodes of urban life, the return to the rural area is justified in terms of 'there was one more', 'I was disoriented', 'it was not my place' and even influenced them in health matters^[6]. Murdoch^[7] uses the extended self-concept, as a form of hybridization in rural areas. From this conceptual position, it is possible to interpret the behavior of urban dwellers with rural roots, who incorporate rural patterns and a continuous

relationship with their rural place of origin into their daily behavior. They would hybridize the urban and rural media in their own daily existence. In other words, they would combine heterogeneous realities (social and material) in their daily tactics and strategies that relate the urban world of life and the rural world of origin and visit. This urban rurality would encompass three spheres: the domestic sphere associated with objects and decoration that try to recreate a rural atmosphere, the nostalgic sphere linked to emotions and the sphere of micro behaviors, linked to daily routines and routines that were exercised in the town. These behaviors would call into question the idea of an urban environment linked to order, progress or learning^[8], which support pro-urban mythologies. There would be an idealization of the rural world, based on one's own biographical experience. This idealization is concrete, and represents and takes shape in a specific place. It is also necessary to consider the urbanites not adapted to the life of the city that idealizes the rural world in its most contrasted values with the urban world, where they can realize as individuals. Idealization does not have a specific place, it is an atmosphere or a medium. This vision places them in urban (symbolic) margins, but this view is more common in rural studies. In this aspect there has been more geographical research.

2.2 Garden Rurality in the City

Rural landscaping, in official, alternative, neighborhood or community urban gardens. Agriculture enclosed in a few square meters. It is a rurality of leisure, where the domesticated nature is recalled and in some cases an alternative to the urban life. It constitutes a remembrance of nature between built spaces. It is perhaps one of the most stereotyped images of urban rurality, exalted by the media themselves and by urban locations and that has recently received considerable attention^[9]. It is an encrusted space of rurality, a struggle for the place.^[10] Being a farmer in the city is a new profession, which generates new identities (professionals) in permanent construction. Rural agriculture describes a varied series of examples that operate at different scales in the city and generate different discourses associated with binary city and rural visions.^[11] They would be 'insignificant spaces'^[12] (p. 209, which are located outside the global dynamics of the city, when they take an alternative form and they are strategies of resistance to small scale, in the form of occupation of empty spaces or without previous meaning. They acquire different formulations, for example in Italy they are connected through the 'community gardens experience', as spaces in between the urban landscape.^[13] The spatial perspective suggests a re-qualification of urban agriculture adapted to its own specific local context with which an interaction

takes place^[9,14]. Urban agriculture movements would hybridize materially and discursively to the context of each place.

2.3 Edge Rurality

Rurality on the edge mainly involves farmers who exercise their activity in the same limit of the built space.^[15] A farmer profession that ends with the disappearance of the landscape where it has occurred. It is an agrarian professional rurality in extinction. The change of land use entails the disappearance of the profession of farmer, the disappearance of a way of life.

There is no clear definition of the urban-rural edge.^[16] Usually this concern has been linked to the policy of land use and conflicts that arise in urban growth in relation to traditional rural activities.^[17] As Bryant et al^[18] suggest, urban growth creates both examples of competition between the traditional activities of agriculture and residential development and recreational activities. It would be an area of interpenetrating rural and urban land uses in the periphery of the contemporary city. For some authors, they would be non-place^[19], but in the current contribution they would be a space of remarkable identity leading to their disappearance. It would be an in-between city and country border, where interests are juxtaposed on the same place of different and multiple actors with particular preferences on the identity of the place.^[20] As a result of the small-scale combination of these changes, the impact is remarkably variable even in small areas and even at the level of individual property scale.^[21] Even in many cases we can speak of ruralization of the city by residential transformations in areas of low density based on connections between place attachment, landscape conservation and alternative strategies of urban development.^[22]3. Conclusion

Usually in rural geography studies a perspective from the city of socio-economic changes prevails in rural areas. The power of urban areas over rural areas has obscured other perspectives of study such as rurality in cities, especially in the global north. In the present contribution we propose three areas of study that express ruralities in cities in developed countries that have undergone a process of restructuring and rural change: urban edge rurality, embedded rurality and individual urban rurality. These dimensions will be developed in next scientific contributions.

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