Agricultural & Rural Studies

Commentary

Some Considerations for Research on Smart and Novelty Villages in Global Rural Areas

Angel Paniagua

Spanish Council for Scientific Research, CSIC, 28037 Madrid, Spain; angel.paniagua@csic.es

1. Introduction

At present, rural geography is a melting pot of options, dominant or secondary, that coexist in the study of rural spaces, which is also projected in the orientations of the rural global (Woods, 2007). Since the sociocultural turn, rural geography has been dominated by minor theory, where the rural locality is a locus for processes of social change between locals and newcomers. In this context, smart and novelty villages are two focuses of growing and renewing geographic attention in recent years (Paniagua, 2020; Zhang & Zhang, 2020).

This contribution argues that the new rural materiality of smart and novelty villages is a hybrid and inclusive route of study of material histories and sociocultural stories in rural environments, which allows amalgamating the life of people in the core of new material artifacts in the analysis of, renew spatial process of rural areas in the world. Places and peoples are governed by processes and flows, which generate fluid materials. Initially, the rural houses could be considered fixed materialities governed by the dialectic and the structural geography that generates opposite geographies. But, the histories of houses and the stories of houses of the smart and novelty villages perform better with the relational postmodern geography, which combines forms, culture and dwelling. In renovated traditional houses there is a tension or a dialectic between external renovation versus internal renovation, between the urban style with/and the old structure.

2. Stories and/or Histories of Novelty and Smart Experimental Materialities and Lives

Since the beginning of the 2000s, the study of heterogeneous realities and the hybridization processes of multiple geographic realities have been a permanent concern in human and rural geography. In this theoretical context, it is possible to situate the individual and community experience in the processes of loss, recovery and transformation of agrarian or rural realities towards smart and novelty villages.

In the context of rural geography, materiality can be a notable way of studying new smart and novelty spatial processes with a socio-material expression through micro encounters (Paniagua, 2022, 2023). Traditionally, the study of rural houses is framed mainly in rural politics or plans, through housing provision in a dialectic people-houses relationship. In particular, in the remote rural areas the houses of smart and novelty villages are key for new population.

In the process of change from traditional society to postmodern societies, smart materials are malleable fluids. Classic contributions to rural studies put houses provision and house transformation as a central theme. In the context of the socio-economic transformation processes of rural areas and the arrival of new social groups. The need for housing and the transformation of traditional houses were linked in the geographical perspective of political-economy. Materiality is relevant in the renewal of the social micro composition of smart rural communities, since it suggests styles of social recomposition around processes of social inclusion or exclusion that acquire their plasticity in the forms of new smart and novelty materialities.

The encounter with the smart and novelty rural material suggests different temporalities and spatialities in the form of histories and stories of intimate encounters. Through human/material experimentality, smart artifacts are reproduced and reinvented over time as individual elements in a field of material heterogeneous networks in the form of affective materialism (Lu & Qian, 2020). In this sense, smart small settlements constitute novelty hybrid forms of heterogeneous realities with different levels of experimental relations, or as suggested by Harvey (2016) there are "formed totalities" that dominate the construction and dissolution processes of the place, where the intimate culture or the "sweetness of the place".

The smart and novelty materialities can be positioned in the current rural global debate as they are artifacts that can appear adaptively and fluidly in the transformation processes of the global south and north. The global nature of novelty and smart materials acquires multiple nuances in

Citation: Paniagua, A. Some Considerations for Research on Smart and Novelty Villages in Global Rural Areas. *Agricultural & Rural Studies*, 2023, *1*, 0006. *https://doi.org/10.59978/ar01010006*

Received: 13 April 2023
Revised: 28 April 2023
Accepted: 8 May 2023
Published: 18 May 2023

local materials. Smart and novelty villages would be elastic and malleable realities with a scalar dimension, which suggest renew social practices that aim to meet new social needs, which are formalized in place and have infinite but differentiated nuances in particular and individual experimental processes (Deleuze, 1994; Massey, 2005). A paradigmatic case is the rural walled villages in southern China and Hong Kong, traditionally defensive constructions that are now multi-ethnic refugees (Ng, 2023). The emblematic traditional ruralities are sites of representation or places with crisis of representation, new sites of others, where life, time and discourse of the others are written.

CRediT Author Statement: This is a single author paper and the author was solely responsible for the content, including the concept, analysis, writing, and revision of the manuscript.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgments: Not applicable.

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