Perspective

Ecological Civilization (Eco-Civ) in the Perspective of Geographical Processes of Revitalization of Remote Rural Areas

Angel Paniagua *

Spanish Council for Scientific Research CSIC, 28037 Madrid, Spain

* Corresponding author. E-mail: angel.panagua@csic.es (A.P.)

ABSTRACT: The global urbanization process is currently taking diverse territorial forms, leading to increased consumption of rural space through the creation of eco-cities. Within this context of transformation and the shifting nature of urban spaces, concepts and ideological frameworks are emerging to address environmental degradation caused by population concentration. Ecological Civilization (eco-civ) originated in China as a broad framework for managing new territorial processes through the construction of new eco-cities or the development of a comprehensive rural revitalization program that strengthens the urban-rural relationship. The major questions arising from this new process of rural revitalization in Chinese territories—and from the very concept of ecological civilization—can be summarized as follows: a simplification of the countryside, a loss of rural identity, the emergence of a post-agrarian society, the urbanization of rural areas, and an exacerbation of urban dependence on rural areas. Consequently, alternative approaches are proposed, based on multiple place-based approaches and actions that develop and adapt the fundamental principles of environmental and spatial renewal to each specific territory.

Keywords: Ecological civilization; Revitalization; Urbanization; Rural areas; Human geography

1. Introduction

In the context of planetary urbanization, the global spatial processes of restructuring subordinate and marginalized rural areas are evident. The duality of dynamic urban areas and declining rural areas is a territorial reality in the second half of the 20th century around the world. The dismantling of traditional rural societies and the migration to cities and large urban areas have accelerated global urbanization and the emergence of megalopolises worldwide.

Since the beginning of this millennium, a process of rural revitalization has been underway in many territories of the Global North and Global South. In areas closer to cities or large urban centers, this revitalization is associated with urban sprawl and the development of new types of rural urbanization. In more remote rural areas, and especially in isolated rural zones, revitalization processes are linked to a return to the countryside by formerly urban populations, to the development of rural development programs in Western countries, and to broader territorially based rural revitalization programs centrally managed by

national governments. In both cases, the relational foundation of space in its most traditional urban-rural category has largely dominated the development of these new spatial processes.

These rural revitalization processes have been accompanied by an ideology emerging from civil society in Western societies (the rural-idyllic) or by a renewal of official ideology, as in the case of China, with the emergence of the ecological civilization approach. This contribution reviews the most common extra-suburbanization processes, the emergence of eco-civ territories, and establishes some possible future horizons for remote rural areas. The central argument is the key place-based role of eco-civ territories in the context of global urbanization and rural revitalization processes founded in new geographies of centrality and marginality. In this sense, this paper critically examines the application of China's Ecological Civilization framework to the revitalization of remote rural areas. It argues that while Eco-Civ presents an ideology of balance, its top-down implementation risks creating a new, urbanized form of rurality that undermines local identity and increases territorial inequality.

2. From Territorial Urbanization to Eco-Civ Territories

The urban world tends toward a homogenization of space, where many territorial structures are repeated, and in this sense, global cities compete to attract spatial flows. In short, global urbanization is the most refined expression of global capitalism, which penetrates and interconnects all territories.

The urbanization of the territory takes on different forms and spatial expressions. The main types of urbanized regions [1] (pp. 123–124) are: 1. City region, 2. Conurbation, 3. Urban field: two hours' drive from urban core areas, 4. Megalopolis: urban system with 25 million inhabitants, 5. Ecumetropolis: an urbanized world with a universal city. This classification is progressive, but in any case, it implies a territorial explosion of cities across extensive geographical areas.

In any case, there are different approaches to the phenomenon of territorial urbanization. For example, Jonas et al. [2] point out that global cities are assemblages in global spaces, beyond national boundaries. The global cities approach is the study of cities and their interrelations worldwide. In this sense, all cities are global within a world of cities. Paddison and Hutton [3] highlight the dynamic nature of cities, which is gradually associated with a shift in perspective from macro-city models to place-specific efforts, and point to the configuration of global suburbanism processes in countries like China and the USA. Couch et al. [4] suggest the existence of urban sprawl processes associated with global cities, which is the traditional viewpoint in urban studies. However, they also note the existence and even relevance of territorial urban sprawl processes in declining urban contexts. In the case of Mexico, Avila [5] writes that the city in the countryside has varied territorial expressions adapted to the characteristics of each region. In the case of China, Fenggan [6] (pp. 171 ss.) points out that the urbanization process in the second half of the 20th century was fostered by China's centralized planning policy, which promoted rural-to-urban migration. Simultaneously, an urban-to-rural migration of more than 20 million urban students was encouraged to settle in rural China. In this way, an apparent urbanization occurs in rural areas in the form of a latent urbanization based on populations with urban characteristics. In sum, everything points to clear processes of suburbanization and urbanization of the territory, in which the urban population consumes and needs more (rural) space.

Within the framework of this process of urbanization, but also of the deterioration of living conditions in global cities, different concepts and forms of space occupation emerge. Eco-cities, in particular, acquire notable relevance, enabling a lifestyle based on living with other people, and more than just human others. In this context, Riddell [7] suggests exurban sprawl control over rural residential settlement on land of (marginal) utility for farming. The processes of rural land occupation for city dwellers are coupled with exurban sprawl control. This new territorial expression of the urban-rural relationship produces a quasi-rural urbanism for ex-urban populations. In this context, small town conservation becomes subordinate and associated with development and degrowth strategies.

The eco-village ideals come from an idealistic peri-urban category based on an adequate ecological context and social harmony. In this orientation, eco-villages promote public transportation, energy efficiency, pedestrian accessibility, waste reduction, and agricultural woodland landscapes. The main eco-cities principles suggested by Register [8] are: restore degraded land, bioregionalism, bio-space, balanced development, halt urban sprawl, energy optimization, encourage community, social equity, preserve history, cultural landscape.

The eco-cities have an inclusive point of view of small town's virtues: compactness, accessibility and pedestrian scale, time of day friendliness, variety of buildings in size and style, mixed plot usage. Small country towns are socially viable, and country town futures are founded on/in place. The small towns strengthen skills and community support systems. Own the idea that their landscape approach is inclusive and enables living a live with a sustainable spirit. Much of this eco-city ideology has been transferred to *eco-civ territories* within the framework of a rearticulation of urban-rural relations.

Ecological Civilization (eco-civ) took on the character of a program in China at the beginning of the 2000s and, since 2007, has been an explicit government goal. Eco-civ aims to move away from economic development and initiate an environmental culture. It has long-term objectives based on environmental and social reforms, with a territorial focus on urban areas where the population and environmental crises are concentrated. Eco-civ has pilot cities to guide the way forward. This new vision aims to significantly influence urban planning and the development of eco-cities or green cities. Urban planning and design are instrumental in building (new) eco-cities, but their failures have contributed to the proliferation of ghost towns with initial under-occupation and excessive consumption of space in anticipation of future settlement trends [9].

The eco-civ has different principles: (1) the joint flourishing of civilization and ecology, (2) the coexistence between man and nature, (3) preservation of clear waters and green mountains, (4) development of adequate ecological movement and green development, (5) articulate environmental management of mountains, rivers, forests, farmlands, lakes, grasslands and deserts; (6) develop an environmental laws system; (7) build a global ecological civilization is a collective effort of the people and maintain a beautiful country is an action of all people. These great principles suggest that the ecological vision describes a natural, unpolluted space and the place of humans in the earth's life system, in a traditional civilization associated with life and beauty. In sum is a change from an anthropocentric point of view of capitalist societies to an eco-centrism worldview. Capitalism system is contrary to the ecological civilization roots, while ignoring the limits of non-renewable resources and promotes a society based on individualism and competitiveness. In this way, the eco-civ promotes the diverse social and cultural (rural) community.

For Hansen, Li and Svarverud [10], the new goal is achieving a safe and sustainable natural environment for human beings (other species rarely mentioned), and they construct a philosophical basis for a new ecological imaginary that is inherently Chinese, with a nationalist twist. The ecological civilization is traced back to the ancient Chinese philosophy of 'nature and man as one'. For Geng and Lo [11] differences between the domestic interpretations of eco-civilization and the global ecological civilization promote the Chinese style of environmental governance and policies, which often involve strong state intervention. Chinese territorial policies are guided by macroeconomic criteria, which means the local dimension of environmental policy has not been sufficiently analyzed.

3. The Rural Pillars of China's Eco-Civ: Revitalization and Its Consequences

The eco-civ emphasizes the rural development approach through ecological productivity. In China, until 2012, the agenda for the countryside was driven by urban-industrial growth needs. Chen, Wei, and Song [12] suggest a process of socialist rural revitalization with Chinese characteristics, based on: rural basic management system, rural deepening reform, food security, modernization of agriculture and rural

areas, integrated development of urban and rural areas, poverty alleviation, new rural construction, ecological civilization construction, and rural governance.

Since 2000, urban land expansion has characterized the dynamics of the largest Chinese cities [13]. According to Wu [14], expanding built-up areas of cities result in excessive loss of arable land; in this sense, urban areas in China grew by 50 percent from 2000 to 2010 (and the Chinese territory lost 8.3 million hectares of arable land). China began its environmental transition in the second decade of the current millennium after a remarkable process of urbanization and uneven territorial development. The new planned urbanization scenarios largely incorporate the environmental health dimension. In this spatial context, ghost cities emerge: newly constructed urban areas in relatively uninhabited districts, which follow the logic of urban expansion throughout the country. The new roots are lands for people.

The rural revitalization strategy in China, developed since the turn of the century, especially since 2017, aims to balance the relationship between large urban areas and the countryside. Feng, Robinson, and Tan [15], in a recent review, suggest that the significant territorial imbalance between urban and rural areas has, since the beginning of this millennium, promoted the progressive development of measures for building a new socialist countryside, with major formal rural revitalization measures implemented since 2017. These measures aim to reconfigure urban-rural dynamics, reduce regional income inequalities, and improve rural living conditions. China's rural revitalization policy is notably planned, a common characteristic of non-democratic and centralized states. Thus, it is a top-down rural development policy that has agricultural modernization through extensive land consolidation programs as one of its pillars.

Indeed, one of the weaknesses of Chinese agriculture is the significant fragmentation of agricultural holdings, which is being addressed through a massive reorganization of farms via land consolidation programs. Furthermore, there are other major programs aimed at reorganizing China's rural economy by generating new job opportunities in the manufacturing and service sectors. However, these policies are also accompanied by a housing policy that facilitates the resettlement and improvement of rural housing through abandonment, reconstruction, or the development of new villages. This policy inherently involves the relocation of large populations of rural people, especially those residing in remote rural areas.

All these rural revitalization measures provoke and promote the emergence of a new and distinct rural society, beyond a traditional peasant society. This transition is accelerated by the expansion of digital infrastructure and the creation of clean and tidy villages. In short, it is a land and housing policy that allows for a new type of urbanization, more balanced between urban and rural areas. This new urban-rural integration is one of the main aims of rural revitalization, with the integration of city dwellers as new rural inhabitants. The dangers of these spatial processes of transformation in rural areas are: (1) the emergence of new social inequality, resulting from the destruction of peasant society, (2) the loss of social and territorial identity as landscapes and settlement patterns are transformed, (3) spatial homogenization within the framework of renewed urbanization of the countryside. The China Ecological Civilization framework is not a single, monolithic program but a constellation of policies implemented across diverse rural contexts. State-led translate into social inequality or identity loss, through land consolidation programs that displace traditional communities, housing policies that standardize vernacular architecture, and migration patterns that disrupt intergenerational local knowledge transfer. In this sense, it is necessary more interest in the study of processes of spatial implementation of ecological civilization and its problematic consequences for the rural areas (e.g., global wind farms or the Three North Shelterbelt Forest Program or Jixian local factory in new electric vehicles).

In sum, as Xin [16] indicates, rural revitalization remains a neo-exogenous state-led politics rather than a community-place based program. However, some programs with place-based foundations are also implemented, such as the specialized villages (SV) programs, based on exploring local development capacities [17]. Some examples are (1) China's original micro-processes of demolition and deconstruction based on resident-led renovation initiatives or (2) 'One Village, One Product', a common type where

villages specialize in a single product—or a single activity—to enhance competitiveness to achieve rural revitalization (e.g., Shuitou small industry transformation).

4. Critical Geographical Perspectives on Eco-Civ

The Chinese ecological civilization raises some doubts and presents different perspectives and scenarios for the future.

1. Ecological civilization or ecological culture. An eco-civ suggests a connection and, to a certain extent, rootedness in a specific (and delimited) territory. In this sense, it would be incompatible with a global eco-civ common to all types of spaces around the world, beyond broad environmental or social principles. Common spatial scenarios for achieving an eco-civ in the Global South or even a common eco-civ for the Global North are not possible. Furthermore, the eco-civ can have multiple perspectives, such as "living apart", associated with an alternative lifestyle to the one that dominates relationships in current societies.

In the case of associating eco-civ with a material culture (e.g., traditional landscapes or architecture), it would be necessary to articulate multiple territorial realities. For example, vernacular architecture in India has up to five basic types: tribal houses of the northeast, villages of the central region, mountain houses, coastal houses, and desert houses. These types express particular variations in human civilization adapted to climate and topography. Territory and cultural landscape are a specific type of eco-civ; in short, eco-civ is a particular way of understanding the global environmental recommendations of UN programs.

Ecological civilization is a way adapted to place and territorial traditions: materialities, immaterialities, and traditional landscapes. Eco-civ also implies new relationships between the urban and rural worlds at national or regional scales. At the local scale, it suggests strong place-based relationships. This has many implications, which can be summarized as distancing the rural world from the urban world [18]. From this perspective, Rodriguez-Pose [19] points out that a strategy based on place-sensitive development policies is needed for peripheral areas. The development of this territorial strategy requires welfare, income support, and large investment projects. In any case, Ecological Civilization suggests a second question about its true possibilities for development in a stage dominated by the remarkable transformation of the environment as a consequence of human action.

2. Is an ecological civilization possible in the Anthropocene era? The answer is founded on small-town conservation with development and degrowth. But, degrowth is mainly a Western point of view for rural revitalization strategies. In a country like China, how is it possible to build a new countryside with its own path and foundations? China needs to establish an ecological civilization that provides an ideological basis for the construction of a (particular way of) green low-carbon model of economic (de)growth [20]. In this sense, the eco-civ territories make possible an environmentally friendly politics as an alternative pathway to ecological societies. However, to achieve this goal, it would be necessary to separate the objectives for rural areas and especially remote areas from urban problems.

3. Urban-rural relations are a neoliberal point of view of unequal territorial power relations. The relational point of view of this geographical binary urban-rural association usually expresses a rural dependency and a way to territorial urbanization of the countryside. An adequate territorial basis of eco-civ needs the own spatial approach. Ecological civilization is non-Eurocentric; consequently, it is multi-territorially based on some key scales of rebuilding the rural space. Ecological civilization from a territorial perspective or vision needs a distancing from the urban territories and multiple place-based foundations [18]. In any case, the eco-civ territorial nature confronts the rural ideals and visions with the possibilities of spatial development. The rural is part of the territory with malleable status at different scales in the context of global processes of urbanization, rural revitalization, and new narratives over non-urbanized territories. Maintaining a state-led approach can lead to the construction of a narrative with little operability.

4. Eco-civ is a slogan? Eco-civ amalgamates plural collective narratives or an individual aggregate narrative in eco-civ. Ecological civilization is a porous concept for non-Western societies and centralized

societies. Furthermore, ecological civilization is degrowth in nature, but in a form adapted to non-Western societies. Eco-civ is based on the conservation of the traditional cultural landscape. But urban sprawl may have distinct features even in a context of decline, adapted to eco-civ. In eco-civ, agents operate at a supra regional level, with the danger of great principles and few results for traditional communities. In a space with the magnitude of rural areas of China, with multiple realities and possibilities of revitalization—even in contradictory terms—the eco-civ can constitute a territorial wildcard to build a common ideal. For this reason, perhaps it is more appropriate to admit different ecological civilizations in the Chinese territory, with different purposes and speeds.

5. Where does the ecological civilization emerge, and what is it? Cultural landscape is a particular eco-civ and in the beginning the pure nature or wilderness is not the ecological civilization. Eco-civ suggests a balanced interaction between nature and people. Eco-civ has three broad scopes: (1) individual assumptions and decisions in benefit of an eco-civ, (2) collective decisions and public politics by different level of decisions and (3) between agencies in a level or scale of decision. In any case eco-civ is a product of anthropocene era and post-visions of non urbanized areas and operates in a territorial dimension as an ideal and a multilayered practice. In this orientation, eco-civ is a product of the anthropogenic era and post-visions of non urbanized areas and operates in a territorial dimension as an ideal and a multilayered practice. A national politics based on environmental/economic initiatives or project of development.

In sum, 1 and 2 are related to place and degrowth strategies, 3 to place-based approaches, 4 suggests some possibilities for an adequate practice of eco-civ in remote rural areas, and 5 introduces some questions about the eco-civ ideals. The eco-civ approach currently faces numerous questions regarding its effectiveness and the possibility of translating broad ideological principles into spatial politics through concrete, place-based approaches. Eco-civ also raises concerns about the risks of an unequal urban-rural relationship, which could lead to the loss of rural values and identities, supplanted by a new urban world in the form of new green and eco-cities in formerly traditional rural areas. In any case, eco-civ territories are associated with a post-productivist era of rural areas with some contradictory purposes: improving the efficiency of agricultural production, generating a more plural society, maintaining key territorial cultural aspects of the landscape, and building new residential landscapes. Eco-civ plays out at two levels: commons ideals for China's rural revitalization strategies and eco-civ territories as a ductile pathway for new rural resiliences.

5. Discussion: An Eco-Civ's Rural Agenda

Rural revitalization policies propose a more geographically nuanced path for Eco-Civ in rural areas, based on a transition from relational geography to a territorial approach, with a renewed relevance of pluralistic localism, resistance to state domination, and the construction of alternative futures.

The link to how this specifically shapes rural revitalization under the Eco-Civ banner could be much stronger, as it is associated with renewed and adaptable rural spaces in the context of social change. The urban realm needs to renovate rural settlement systems, with new narratives of place in the global.

What is the central argument regarding Eco-Civ and rural revitalization? The eco-civ of rural revitalization is a (de)growth of culturally driven rural regeneration, based on multiple geographies of existing differences and resistances. Is it fundamentally a new form of urbanization? The emergence of global cities and globalization is characteristic of a particular phase of history [21]. In response, rural areas need new approaches and culturally driven processes of revitalization. Is it an impossible ideal? Not, applied on a local basis, is possible a flexible approach to revitalizing rural areas, building around de dynamics of local populations where the eco-civ reside in the intimate and everyday patterns of use of the cultural rural environment. This point of view offers the possibility of building malleable spaces of eco-civ based in processes of rural change. Rural trajectories and new interaction patterns among neighbors will undoubtedly emerge in the process of reconstituting place-based local spaces and communities.

Undoubtedly, territorial dynamics generate new class relations, but in societies where there are no major problems of external migration, it is easier to generate sustainable communities through a community-based approach, as there is no significant cultural contrast. Spatial singularities can be expressed through particular experiences in eco-civ territories. New socially sustainable communities must have a certain degree of autonomy, independence, and balanced access to opportunities, in addition to reducing social exclusion and encouraging effective community governance arrangements.

A theoretical bridge between global urban studies and critical rural geography is necessary for the adequate analysis of eco-civ realities and its possible relevance in the new 'so-what' of rural geography. This perspective, based in geographical rural distanciation approach, suggests a renovated network of rural-territorial communities with strong place-social interaction identities [18], where traditional community (ies) is the main agent of territorial and social change. Undoubtedly, this process requires a new set of binary relationships in place that redefine private-public, individual-collective, markets-regulations/plans, men-rural environment, or identities and sense of place. The linkages between local areas and other parts of spaces are articulated on a horizontal basis in equivalent areas of relevance. The micro linkages—as the closure of local spaces with other parts of the territories—in some forms substitute for the macro linkages over large territories.

Undoubtedly, many revitalization processes are based on Land and Housing policies, as they offer opportunities for congested metropolitan areas. This perspective aims to combine this with the creation of spaces that guarantee the right of more traditional populations to continue living in their communities. However, this policy is largely based on an urban-rural relational viewpoint that prioritizes and subordinates rural spaces to urban needs. In reality, when these policies are implemented in countries with historical depopulation, they do not lead to a true revitalization of rural areas but rather to the decongestion of the most overcrowded urban areas. The territorial revitalization strategies have an urban focus and a functional purpose that subordinate and ultimately supplant the rural world to serve the needs of the urban world. The umbrella concept of resilience applies to a multitude of situations or scenarios; it is a catch-all term in territorial and rural policies, primarily in Western contexts. However, territorial resilience is strong when it is based on pluralistic local societies and economies, and weak when it is associated with territorial processes of socioeconomic simplification. On the contrary, an eco-civ rural retains the distinctive socio-economic and cultural signs of local rural societies as the axis of the new processes of rural recomposition and revitalization. Undoubtedly, the development of eco-civ formulas for rural revitalization is more likely to succeed in spatial contexts with strong cultural roots across the whole country.

To retain the cultural roots and adapt to renovate communities resulting from rural revitalization processes, it is necessary to develop a new building on the previous social and even territorial structures, gradually adapting them to the new purposes of the revitalization processes. Thus, environmental and socio-cultural aspects are two paths in the same direction that intertwine. It is neither possible nor even appropriate to create territorial revitalization scenarios based on socio-territorial structures that are practically disappearing, or to generate new ones that are separate from the old ones. First, it is necessary to strengthen traditional structures and elites so they can withstand the impact of new social groups emerging as a result of spatial recomposition processes. This will make it more likely that lasting territorial structures governed by place-based spatial processes will be created. Second, the forms of new urbanization processes in rural areas will be better adapted to traditional settlement patterns and those that are generally more respectful of the rural environment.

Territorial eco-civilizations (ies) need to amalgamate old and new spatial structures with infinite and malleable purposes of revitalization that reconcile traditional and new populations with renewed expectations for the place. But, in this sense, a certain qualitative and quantitative balance is necessary to allow for a certain equilibrium. This equilibrium is not singular; on the contrary, it depends on the singularities and potential of each territorial eco-civ. It is neither good nor advisable to supplant spatial and

socio-cultural structures that are the product of a long historical process. Rural areas, and especially remote rural areas, are the last territorial refuge for experimenting with a society in harmony with its surrounding environment, but this goal will be impossible under urban forms.

6. Conclusions

There are global urbanization processes with planetary trends that tend to increase space consumption and the deterioration of life in large cities. Eco-civ is a revitalization strategy with notable objectives, but it currently presents significant questions about its future application across large areas. In rural areas, it can increase social inequality and erode traditional territorial identity, as well as reinforce the urban-rural relationship through the urbanization of rural space. An appropriate eco-civ ideology should shift from a top-down approach to one based on multiple place-based realities. In short, it should move from broad principles to a practice based on the socio-territorial characteristics of each place. This orientation requires the generation of flexible territorial schemes at intermediate decision-making levels and a clear assumption by rural communities of their own future, detached from the urban world. In summary, eco-civ cannot constitute the territorial ideology of a land and housing program for ex-urban populations. Eco-civilization is situated within a process of rural recomposition and revitalization, but on non-rural, place-based territorial foundations. This is a characteristic it shares with other Western strategies of spatial development: the territorial basis over the rural dimension. This poses a significant danger, given the need to reconcile urban and rural interests—that is, the territory as an open field for urban expansion and the possibilities for the continued existence of local and traditional rural populations, who are typically in a situation of dependence and subordination. This perspective aims to replace rural spaces with equivalent urban/rural territories. In this process, the key ideals of national rural societies and spaces are intentionally lost and transformed to support new urban visions for a renewed, modern rural territory.

Eco-civ as a symbol can exacerbate the value of some areas of a country and their own symbolism at the expense of others. In this sense, the eco-civ can contribute to territorial inequality. For example, in China there are multiple spatial symbols: Beijing and the North; Shanghai in the center; Hong Kong in the south; the southeast; the northeast; Inner Mongolia; and Tibet… To which large landscape or regional unit does the eco-civ, or each eco-civ, belong? The construction of one or multiple eco-civ implies assuming a myth of the countryside, but not from a Western perspective. It is precise, drawing on other points of view from mythological and geographical traditions. Eco-civ ideals have better chances of application in the Global South than in societies far removed from their rural or agrarian origins.

Finally, this paper has a perspective orientation with some limitations: absence of primary data; the challenge of analyzing a rapidly evolving policy framework, the difficulty of accessing Chinese-language policy documents or local case study, and finally, the speculative nature of claims about the cultural loss.

Ethics Statement

Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement

Not applicable.

Declaration of Competing Interest

This author declares that he has no know competing financial interest or personal relationship that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

References

1. Pacione M. *Urban Geography: A Global Perspective*; Routledge: London, UK, 2001.
2. Jonas AEG, McCann E, Thomas M. *Urban Geography a Critical Introduction*; Wiley-Balckwell: Oxford, UK, 2015.
3. Paddison R, Hutton T. (Eds.). *Cities and Economic Change: Restructuring and Dislocation in the Global Metropolis*; Sage: London, UK, 2015.
4. Couch C, Leontidou L, Petschel-Held G. (Eds.). *Urban Sprawl in Europe Landscapes. Landscape Change and Policy*; Blackwell Pub.: London, UK, 2007.
5. Avila H. (Coord.). *La ciudad en el campo*; UNAM (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México): Cuernavaca, Mexico, 2025.
6. Zhong F. Urbanization. In *The Changing Population of China*; Peng X, Guo Z, Eds.; Blackwell Pub.: London, UK, 2000; pp. 167–178.
7. Riddell R. *Sustainable Urban Planning*; Blackwell: London, UK, 2004.
8. Register R. *Ecocities: Rebuilding Cities in Balance with Nature*; New Society Publ.: Gabriola Island, BC, Canada, 2001.
9. Lin Z. *Constructing Utopias: China's New Town Movement in the 21st Century*; Oxford Univ. Press: New York, NY, USA, 2025.
10. Hansen M, Li H, Svarverud R. Ecological civilization: Interpreting the Chinese past, projecting the global future. *Glob. Environ. Change* **2018**, *53*, 195–203. DOI:10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2018.09.014
11. Geng Q, Lo K. Global ecological civilization: An analysis of macro-level policies of the Belt and Road Initiative. *Res. Glob.* **2023**, *7*, 100141. DOI:10.1016/j.resglo.2023.100141
12. Chen X, Wei H, Song Y. *Rural Revitalization in China. A Socialist Road with Chinese Characteristics*; Springer: Singapore, 2023.
13. Wu W, Gao Q. (Eds.). *China Urbanizing Impacts and Transitions*; Univ. Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia, PA, USA, 2023.
14. Wu W. Paying for urbanization: Land finance and impacts. In *China Urbanizing Impacts and Transitions*; Wu W, Gao Q, Eds.; Univ. Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia, PA, USA, 2023; pp. 16–37.
15. Feng Z, Robinson GM, Tan Y. Rural Revitalization in China: Reversing Rural Decline and Eliminating Poverty. *Geogr. Compass* **2025**, *19*, e70039. DOI:10.1111/gec3.70039
16. Xin S. State-driven social innovation: Can neo-exogenous development address rural marginalization? A tale of two villages in China. *J. Rural. Stud.* **2026**, *121*, 103922. DOI:10.1016/j.jrurstud.2025.103922
17. Wu N, Liang Z, Liu M, Zhang J, Guo Y, Qiao J. Regional drivers or local constraints? Spatial patterns and development pathways of specialized villages in Henan, China. *J. Rural. Stud.* **2026**, *121*, 103877. DOI:10.1016/j.jrurstud.2025.103877
18. Paniagua A. Rural distanciation: A new geographical approach to remote rural spaces. *Scott. Geogr. J.* **2025**, *141*, 181–195. DOI:10.1080/14702541.2024.2419453
19. Rodriguez-Pose A. The revenge or the places that don't matter (and what to do about it). *Camb. J. Reg. Econ. Soc.* **2018**, *11*, 189–209. DOI:10.1093/cjres/rsx024
20. Pan J. *China's Environmental Governing and Ecological Civilization*; Springer: Berlin/Heidelberg, Germany, 2016.
21. Knox P, Pinch S. *Urban Social Geography. An Introduction*; Routledge: London, UK, 2010.