

THE RURAL: IN AN ERA OF MOBILITIES AND IN LOCALISED VIRAL MOMENTS

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Abstract

Numerous academics have argued that we now live in an era where a multiple sense of mobility has displaced a more fixed sedentarist everyday existence. Whilst expressed daily in news stories of international migrants and the contested politics of their migrations, mobilities extend far beyond human migration. It is a state, moreover, closely allied to the more generally and widely noted process of globalisation. This talk will address the question of where 'the rural' fits within this era of global mobilities combination. On the one hand, consolidating its position within 'modernising' discourses, the rural may seem to be an increasingly anachronistic category, out of date and out of step with the 21st Century. It is a spatial term to be discarded. Yet, on the other hand, the rural may be seen as reinvigorated and of considerable contemporary relevance to the demands placed on people by the global mobilities condition. This reading will be illustrated with reference to counterurban migration and rural leisure, where aspects of place, home, relaxation and nature will be drawn out. Attention will then turn to a perceived very recent realisation of the importance of the rural when the dominant global mobilities era is temporarily disrupted and even stopped. A Lefebvrian 'moment' of suddenly localised life, experienced from the Covid-19 threat, is argued to have thrust the rural into a desired existential foreground once again. Overall, the talk will propose the rural to be a fecund source of 21st Century identity and even as still a radical socio-cultural force.

Long-debate on (non-)place of the rural today... given recent 'stimulus' via Covid!

1. Contextual paradigms: an era of mobilities and globalisation

Mobilities

Globalisation

Mobilities and globalisation qualified

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2. Where is the 'rural'?

Anathema?

3a. Mobilised and globalised

E.g. GLOBAL-RURAL project (2014-19) (Woods et al.)

E.g. global asset for food security & resilience

3b. Mobilised and localised

E.g. rural second home consumption

3c. Immobilised and globalised

E.g. rural craft working

3d. Immobilised and localised

E.g. pro-rural migration (Halfacree & Rivera 2012)

4. Conclusion: alter-rurality or re-statement in Covid times?

'Place' of rural within era of mobilities & globalisation

Rural = Janus-like with respect to mobilities & globalisation:

i. Caught up with / implicated: irrelevant or built-on (asset)

ii. Challenge: obstacle, critic, escape (local mooring)

Site of counter-space & potential differential space

And/or: re-stating itself as 'non-urban' in these Covid times?