



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Land Use Policy

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/landusepol



The modification of North China quadrangles in response to rural social and economic changes in agricultural villages: 1970–2010s

Fang Yangang*, Liu jisheng

School of Geographical Science, Northeast Normal University, 5268 Renmin Street, Changchun, Jilin Province, 130024, PR China

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 20 June 2013

Received in revised form 8 February 2014

Accepted 10 February 2014

Keywords:

North China quadrangle (NCQ)

Rural folk housing

Agricultural village

Socio-economic changes

State policies

ABSTRACT

In Chinese agricultural villages, housing provides multiple functions for rural households. With the transition of state policies and regional socio-economic development in China over the last 40 years, farmers have modified the layout and form of rural housing to adapt to the shifts in their livelihoods and lifestyles. Rural housing built by the remittances of migrant workers has produced negative externalities in densely populated agricultural regions, whilst in some villages, traditional housing has been demolished as part of settlement rationalization plans, with peasants relocated to apartment-style housing. These practices have been controversial and generated conflicts between peasants and local governments. Thus, rural housing has become a theoretical and practical problem in rural China that cannot be resolved with a “one-size-fits-all plan or policy”. Based on field surveys and interviews in three case villages, this paper examines how the form and layout of North China quadrangles (NCQs, or *Huabei siheyuan*), the four-sided folk housing built by people of the Han nationality in northern China, have been modified since the 1970s. We discuss the land use problems arising from the evolution of NCQs and options for solutions. We found that NCQs in agricultural villages have undergone several dramatic modifications: NCQs built during the collectivist agriculture era (1970s) were traditional in style but had reduced functions; NCQs built during the agriculture intensification era (1980s to mid-1990s) played an important role in agriculture production; and NCQs built in the cyclical migration era (mid-1990s to date) are typically modern and spacious. These modifications to the form of NCQs can be seen as adaptation and survival strategies of rural households in response to socio-economic transitions, their changing livelihoods, and changes in their needs over the course of their lives. Today, rural houses with varied qualities, abandoned houses, and empty plots of land coexist and intermingle together in rural settlements. To manage this chaotic situation, we suggest macro-level solutions with targeted measures to respect variations in farmers' characteristics and interests and avoid impairing the diversity and adaptability of rural folk housing.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

Folk houses are a major component of rural cultural landscapes, traditionally providing space for farmers to accommodate their property, harvests, equipment, livestock, and family. Discursively, folk houses have variously been assigned roles as a market commodity, a marker of community identity, a productive resource, a health issue, an expression of citizens' rights, and a political pawn (Rakowski, 1995), reflecting a combination of cultural heritage, current fashion, functional needs, and positive and negative aspects of the non-cultural environment (Kniffen, 1965). As such, the layout and form of rural folk housing has been modified over time by farmers in response to the social and economic transformations in their

livelihoods, lifestyles, and income levels, particularly as part of the ‘modernization process’ in developing and transitional countries (Aguilar, 2009; Banski and Wesolowska, 2010; Fry, 2008; Klooster, 2005; Knapp, 1996; Ruda, 1998).

This process is especially easily observed in China, where over the last four decades, rural communities have experienced dramatic changes along with trends in state policies for regional socio-economic development, including the collectivization of agriculture and the resulting sacrifice of peasants' interests (Shen and Xia, 2011); the implementation of a ‘household responsibility system’ and the development of modern agriculture (Lin, 1987; Tilt, 2008); rural industrialization (Mukherjee and Zhang, 2007; Yao, 1997) and the *in situ* partial urbanizing of rural people¹ (Veeck

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: fangyg578@nenu.edu.cn (F. Yangang).

¹ *In situ* partial urbanization means that rural people remain in rural townships and take up nonfarm sector employment without migrating to cities, viz., “leave

and Pannell, 1989; Zhu, 2000); the rapid growth of cities supported by circular migration (Hu et al., 2011a; Mullan et al., 2011; Zhang, 2010); and urban expansion and farmland requisitioning (Friedmann, 2006; Xu et al., 2011). These socio-economic transitions have structured and shaped changes in the condition and characteristics of farmers, resulting in and manifested by modifications to rural housing.

Previous literature examined the esthetic and ecological value of traditional folk housing in China, (Liu et al., 2011a; Wang and Cai, 2006), the passive design of rural housing (Bouillot, 2008; Dong and Jin, 2013; Zeng et al., 2011), and in some cases, the dynamic modification of rural folk housing itself (Hu et al., 2011b; Lu and Jiang, 2009). However, many of these studies have been by architects, whose main concerns are issues such as building technologies, energy consumption, and environmental impact (Chen et al., 2007; Yang and Jiang, 2008). There is a paucity of research that systematically examines the historical modification of rural folk housing in response to socio-economic changes (Knapp, 1996; Sargeson, 2002), including transitions in state policy, which, as Woods (2010) observes, have “the capacity to influence the appearance of the rural landscape, the structure of the rural economy, the pattern of the settlement, the character of the rural population, the nature of rural education and health care, the presence of fauna and flora . . . and the standard of living of rural people” (p. 232).

Moreover, the evolution of rural housing in China has itself become a policy issue. In many districts, local governments have intervened in the design and construction of rural housing, villages have been destroyed, and peasants have been relocated to large, centralized housing units located in “new rural communities” to improve farmers’ living conditions, meet the soaring demand for urban construction land, strengthen national food security, and reduce the cost of public goods and services for rural residents (Christiansen, 2009; Long et al., 2009, 2012; Looney, 2012; Tu, 2010; Xu et al., 2011). However, in an article published in *Seeking Truth* (Qishi), on January 16, 2012, former Premier Wen Jiabao emphasized that rural construction should maintain its own features instead of bringing urban designs to the countryside and forcing farmers to live in high-rise buildings (Wen, 2012). Rural housing has therefore become a political and academic debate, a regulation battlefield, and a practical problem in China (Liu et al., 2010b, 2011b; Long et al., 2007, 2009, 2010; Song et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2012b).

Moreover, this debate cannot be separated from the broader context of socio-economic change in rural China. In general, two main pathways for rural development have been followed as part of the modernization process. One is capital being relocated to labor (industrialization); the other is labor being relocated to capital (out-migration). This paper is concerned with the latter, agricultural villages that possess virtually no industry (aside from handicrafts), because these continue to be the main element in Chinese countryside despite the trend of rural industrialization in southeastern coastal areas. On the other hand, rural housing built by the remittances of circular migrant workers has resulted in the waste of money, room vacancy, village-hollowing, and loss of arable land, as well as decreasing potential for ensuring food security in many agricultural villages (Fang and Liu, 2008; Long et al., 2010). In this paper, we discuss the land use problems arising from previous changes in rural housing in agricultural villages and solutions for addressing these problems.

As such, this study is an exploratory attempt to fill the gaps in research and contribute to better understanding of changes to and pressures on rural folk housing in China. We do this by studying

the contemporary evolution of the North China quadrangle (NCQ), or *Huabei siheyuan*, the four-sided folk housing built by people of the Han nationality in northern China. The NCQ is one of the major types of folk housing in China, which has a rich variety of folk housing due to its natural, cultural, and ethnic diversity, including the Mongolian yurt (*menggu bao*), the residential tower (*dialou*) of the Tibetan and Qiang nationalities, and the bamboo house (*zhulou*) of the Dai and Dong nationalities. The folk housing of the Han nationality, the largest ethnic group in China, can take different forms that reflect differences in local climate, terrain, and construction materials, including the cave house (*yaodong*) on the Loess Plateau, the earth building in the Fujian province, as well as the NCQ. The layouts and forms of NCQs can also be influenced by the characteristics of individual villages, such as the quantity of building land and socio-economic factors. For example, Song et al. (2012) found that the structure of rural housing varies due to differences in socio-economic developmental levels and agricultural types, and Long et al. (2007, 2009) pointed out that in coastal China, many rural individual houses are in mixed use, incorporating small factories, craft and other retail shops, restaurants, and related privately owned and operated businesses.

The reminder of this paper is organized as follows. First, we provide a brief literature review on rural housing changes in transitional countries, especially in China. Second, we briefly describe the NCQ, the different stages of rural transitions in China since the 1970s at a general level, and the relationship between rural folk housing and socio-economic changes. Third, we outline the data collection and analysis methods used in our case study. Finally, we illustrate the empirical results and our main findings and discuss the problems engendered by the evolution of NCQs in case villages and solutions for these problems.

Literature review

Previous academic studies have recorded the demolition of traditional rural folk housing in many parts of the world, often as part of ‘rural modernization’ programs. For example, Fry (2008) described that in Mexico, increasing numbers of rural dwellings were composed of concrete blocks, and Klooster (2005) noted new houses of concrete and brick in Guatemala and Ecuador. Ruda (1998) similarly described how rural residents of socialist states in Central and Eastern Europe were induced to abandon both folk housing and folk traditions after the 1950s.

The replacement of traditional folk housing was not entirely forced or unjustified. Jagadish (1979) argued that traditional building technologies were inadequate to meet the needs of rural residents and communities in India and proposed alternative building technologies. Ruda (1998) reported that rural residents in Eastern Europe often moved willingly to new, larger, and more modern homes. However, Ruda also described disadvantages of the new housing, including unused space, waste of between 30 and 50% of investment costs, and lack of connection between the house and nature. Banski and Wesolowska (2010) argued that the development of new styles of buildings led to changes in the traditional configuration of villages in Poland.

Furthermore, the demolition of rural folk housing has transformed the social geography of villages. Klooster (2005) observed that modern concrete and brick houses in Latin America have created a “gentrified landscape of cultivated real estate” that reflects wealth acquired through remittances from family members working away from the community. As such, Klooster describes these concrete and brick structures as the visible evidence of rural social reproduction under capitalism.

Aguilar (2009) similarly found that when visiting somewhat inaccessible upland villages in Batangas province, south of Manila, one gets a sensation of being inside one of the gated middle-class

the soil but not the village” (*litu bulixiang*) and “enter the factory but not the city” (*jinchang bujincheng*).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6548630>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6548630>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)