

**Reflections on fifty years of European Rural Sociology.
From empiricism and materialism to postmodernism and back again.**

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Five trends in European Rural Sociology

- ✓ The ethnographic, anthropological and qualitative traditions
- ✓ Marxist and materialist traditions
- ✓ Environmentalist, greening traditions
- ✓ Social constructionist and postmodernist traditions
- ✓ Rural development, comparative and evaluation traditions



The post WWII migrations of Europe

- ✓ 430 000 Karelians after the Winter war 1940, another 200 000 had to move in 1945
- ✓ Finland lost 10% of its land mass and 10% of the Finnish population had to move
- ✓ 12 millions ethnical Germans from Eastern Europe to Germany and Austria
- ✓ Immigration of Jews from Europe and America to Palestina, mostly settling in collectivist kibbutzim in the countryside
- ✓ Exodus from the countryside because of industrialisation and agricultural mechanisation



European rural studies in the 1950s and 1960s

- ✓ **Studies of migration and planning**
- ✓ **Research on consequences of resettlement**
- ✓ **Studies of agricultural policies.**
- ✓ **Community studies (surviving WWII)**



Conceptual perspectives and intellectual orientations

- ✓ **Functionalist modernisation theory;**
- ✓ **Freedom, progress, and rationalisation (Hofstee)**
- ✓ **Language idealism**
- ✓ **Marxist and neo-Marxist traditions**
- ✓ **Ethnographic, anthropological and qualitative traditions (Tönnies)**

✓



New trends in 1980s and 1990s

- ✓ **Gender studies**
- ✓ **The environmentalist (green) turn**
- ✓ **The cultural, social constructivist turn**



Strong points of ERS

- ✓ **ESRS congresses**
 - ✓ **Sociologia Ruralis and The Journal of Rural Studies**
 - ✓ **ESRS Summer Schools**
- ! Europe is taking the lead in international rural studies**



Future prospects and challenges

- ✓ **Climate change and energy shortage;**
- ✓ **neo-colonialism and neo-productivism**
- ✓ **Rural policy and politics research;**
- ✓ **The Second pillar of CAP and**
- ✓ **The Obama grand rural tour of 2009**
- ✓ **World food crisis;**
- ✓ **Copenhagen UN Climate Change Conference in December**
- ✓ **World Summit on Food Security in Rome in November**

