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TOWARDS A SPATIALISED AND CIRCULATORY ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL
STRUCTURE

**A SOCIAL SPACE APPROACH TO INVESTIGATE RURAL EUROPE: AN
OUTLINE OF A STATE OF THE ART.**

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This paper outlines a sociological approach to the analysis of European rural areas grounded in Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social space and its homologies with symbolic and physical space. Drawing on a critical review of Bourdieu's major contributions—ranging from his early ethnographic work in colonial Algeria and rural France to the development of the concepts of habitus, capital, field and social space—the paper argues that Bourdieusian sociology provides a robust framework for analysing contemporary rural transformations. Particular attention is paid to how distinctions in social space are materialised, experienced and appropriated through spatial practices and territorial configurations. The paper also revisits key extensions of this framework in urban sociology and spatial

research, including studies on housing estates, territorial stigmatisation and lifestyle differentiation, demonstrating their relevance for rural analysis. Without overlooking the knowledge gained from research conducted in urban contexts, the article draws attention to significant, yet lesser-known, Bourdieusian contributions to rural sociology. With the help of a comprehensive inventory, these include classic analyses of peasant societies and more recent works on localised social spaces and rural inequalities. By integrating relational spatial theory with empirical investigation, the paper highlights how social space in rural areas is structured by uneven distributions of capital and how these structures manifest in material and symbolic geographies. The study contributes to IRSA 15 themes by offering a multi-method framework that connects social theory with comparative rural transformations, addressing contemporary questions of inequality, differentiation, and the spatialisation of social life in rural Europe. This approach underscores the relevance of relational, topological perspectives in advancing rural sociological research.

Palavras-chave: bourdieu; social space; rural; europe; comparison.