

IRSA - CONGRESSO MUNDIAL DE SOCIOLOGIA RURAL (01/10/2025 A
20/01/2026) - IRSA 15 - BEYOND URBAN AND RURAL SOCIOLOGY:
TOWARDS A SPATIALISED AND CIRCULATORY ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL
STRUCTURE

**RECLASSIFYING THE RURAL: MOVING TOWARDS A JUST AND
RELATIONAL RURAL TYPOLOGY**

Marh Echtai (m.echtaï@tudelft.nl)

Rodrigo Viseu Cardoso (R.O.V.Cardoso@tudelft.nl)

Caroline Newton (c.e.l.newton-1@tudelft.nl)

European rural typologies still largely classify “rural” through structural-functional proxies (density, remoteness, sectoral structure), often treating territories as static units rather than contested socio-spatial formations shaped by power dynamics, social recognition, and institutional legibility (understood as the ways in which places and populations are rendered categorizable and governable within administrative and policy frameworks). Building on a critical review of dominant European typologies, this paper develops a justice-aware alternative that draws attention to the consequential nature of classification. Classification structures visibility, eligibility, and the distribution of resources, and dominant

typological frameworks have often masked how inequalities are produced and lived across places.

We advance a socio-relational framework that integrates Bourdieusian relational theory (capital, field, habitus) with spatial justice (redistribution, recognition, participation). Operationally, we adapt the trialectic of social, symbolic, and physical space into a typology-building logic that captures how inequalities are institutionalised, internalised, and materialised in rural territories. The resulting matrix translates theory into measurable dimensions by linking each space to tractable proxies and EU-feasible datasets at the sub-national scale, enabling comparative mapping and clustering without collapsing rural diversity into (a limited number of) descriptive indicators.

We strengthen stratification sensitivity by adding a social class layer to the matrix. Proxies of capital volume and composition (e.g., occupational structure, economic activities, and circulation of social groups) are used to distinguish (social) positions. This added layer makes classed exposure to transition pressures empirically legible while keeping the typology grounded in a relational conception of rurality.

By translating relational theory into an operational typology architecture, the paper offers a transferable framework for diagnosing rural inequalities and transition readiness in a way that is empirically implementable and normatively explicit. This allows for more accountable comparison, more targeted policy design, and clearer interpretation of what rural “types” actually encode.

Palavras-chave: rural typologies; socio-relational typology; spatial justice; social capital; social class.