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Rural Sociology in Europe²

Rural sociology as it is understood in the United States came into being in Europe only after World War II. On the surface, this seems somewhat surprising. An important part of the population of Europe is still rural. During the last few decades in most European countries the percentage of the active population engaged in agriculture was higher than in the United States, in several countries much higher. Sociology as a science originated from Europe. So why no rural sociology at an earlier date?

There are several reasons which help to explain this phenomenon. First of all, one has to bear in mind that rural sociology as we know it now is not just *the* sociology of rural life. One could imagine a rural sociology in many respects quite different from the present. Rural sociology as we know it in America and elsewhere has strong roots in practice. Even if it would not be right to call rural sociology just an applied science, it would be equally wrong to deny its strong interest in the problems of daily life and its striving for applicability. Rural sociology never would have developed in the way it did if it had not shown its importance for the betterment of rural life. But before World War II, sociology in Europe was hardly seen by nonprofessionals as a science which had a practical value. This conclusion was right. Sociology as it was taught and studied in Europe before the war was, for the greater part, highly theoretical and often even philosophical in character. Thus, there was no place for a rural sociology with a strong orientation to applicability. Many sociologists even sought generalizations at such a high level that differences between rural and nonrural society hardly came

¹ The author is Chairman of the European Society for Rural Sociology.

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into consideration, so that on a more abstract level there were not many chances for a special study of rural life either.³ At any rate, one can state that the kind of rural sociology which has been developed in America did not fit into the dominating concept of sociology in Europe before 1940.

You may reply that more or less the same was true for America. Rural sociology was not conceived as a welcome child of general sociology in your country either. As you know, rural sociology originated here in fact from the Land Grant Colleges, that means from institutes for applied higher education, and not from the general universities. I know that it took some time before it was accepted as a legitimate daughter of general sociology. Even in 1951, when I visited your country, I had the feeling that at some of your institutes of higher learning there was still some tension between rural sociology and general sociology. Not all general sociologists seemed to be convinced that rural sociology was a respectable kind of sociology. But I have the impression, nevertheless, that already during the thirties the chances for the acceptance of rural sociology as a branch of sociology in general were much better in America than in Europe.

The climate for the acceptance of rural sociology in Europe would have been better, perhaps, if the communication between scholars in the field of sociology in Europe and America before the war had been as good as it was after the war. In fact, the contacts between scientists in Europe and America in general, and between the sociologists in particular, before the war were rather few. It would not be right to say that American sociology was unknown in Europe, but the European sociologists, in general, were not quite aware of what was going on in America. Of the fathers of sociology in the United States, one could find some publications on their bookshelves, but one could not say that they had an influence of importance on sociological thinking in Europe.⁴ Only a few in Europe were conscious of the fact that already at the end of the twenties American sociologists were beginning to write a new page in the history of sociology. I believe that in Europe in about 1930 the best known author in the field of sociology in this country was Sorokin. Whatever Sorokin's virtues may be, one cannot say that he was representative of American sociology, not even at that moment! I remember

³ As an example of a rather abstract, "purely scientific" study of rural life in prewar Europe one can consider Leopold von Wiese, "Das Dorf" (The Village), Von Duncaer und Humblot, München und Leipzig, 1928.

⁴ René König for example tells in the preface to the "Handbuch der empirischen Sozialforschung" (Handbook for Empirical Social Research), vol. 1, Ferdinand Enke Verlag, Stuttgart, 1962, of which the first volume was recently published under his editorship, that he got his first introduction into American sociology from Vierkandt and Thurnwald at the University of Berlin thirty years ago. But one can hardly say that American sociology had an influence of real importance on Vierkandt and Thurnwald.

that in the beginning of the thirties as a student at the University of Amsterdam I had to read a paper on the book, *Social Attitudes*, edited by Kimball Young in 1931. My criticism was slashing. I do not dare to repeat the conclusions I drew in youthful recklessness. I had no idea at that time how important the concept which was discussed in that book would be in sociological research in the coming years, and what would be the role of some of the authors I criticized, not only for the development of sociology in America, but for that matter in the world in general. And my professor did not correct me.

With few exceptions, the European sociologists did not know that by careful gathering of data by means of fieldwork and by an equally careful processing of these data by statistical methods, the Americans were introducing a new type of research which would change the face of sociology drastically. Only at the end of the thirties did they become gradually aware that in this respect something of great importance was developing, but this had hardly any effect before the end of the war.

I think I am right in saying that, in my opinion, the introduction of these new methods and techniques of research gave rural sociology in America the opportunity to acquire an important role in education and research with regard to rural life and agriculture. They made it possible to get away from a rather vague lecturing on rural life and to produce results which showed to outsiders there was something useful in the activities of those queer people who called themselves rural sociologists. Just because this new type of research remained virtually unknown, the possible importance of rural sociology did not occur to the people interested in the improvement of agriculture and rural life in Europe. The best known American publication in Europe in the thirties which mentioned rural sociology in its title was Sorokin and Zimmerman's "Principles of Rural-Urban Sociology," and in this case Sorokin did not make clear either what could be expected of the new type of sociology which was developing in America.

Perhaps the influence of American sociology in Europe would have been stronger if, in the thirties, the development of sociology had not already suffered severely from the existing political conditions. "Sociology and dictatorship are incompatible," was an expression I heard repeatedly from Bonger, one of my professors in sociology. Italy, which had given important contributions to the development of sociology in Europe, in fact stopped doing so in the twenties. In 1933, Germany, the country of Max Weber, dropped out. In 1940, night came over continental Europe and over the study of sociology in that part of the world.

One other factor should be mentioned with regard to the late development of rural sociology in Europe, viz., the different character of higher education in agriculture and of extension in Europe as compared with America. It seems very important to me that for several decades before

World War II home economics was included in the normal curriculum and in the extension activities of Land Grant Colleges. That means that already for years the American extension service worked not only for the farmer but for the farm family as a whole. In Europe, before the war, there was not a single university or college where home economics was part of the curriculum. Even now it is an exception. Home economics advisory work, as far as it existed before the war, had no relation with agricultural extension. It is almost impossible when you work for the farm family as a whole to neglect the social aspects of rural life. The aims of the extension service, as they are formulated in the United States, I think, show clearly the strong conviction that its activities have to do with rural social life in all its aspects. In European countries agricultural advisory work was restricted to the economic and technical field. Only after the war—and not yet everywhere—has there gradually developed a link between agricultural advisory work in the strict sense and home economics advisory work in the countryside. In the countries or districts where this is the case, it leads to an increased demand for rural sociological research and information.

The fact that in Europe there was no rural sociology in the modern sense did not mean, of course, that more or less systematic knowledge about rural life was totally lacking. In several countries other disciplines showed an interest in rural life. In France, for example, human geographers of the group of *Vidal de la Blache* were strongly interested in the study of the socio-economic way of life—*genre de vie*—of rural regions. In Germany elements of the study of social life of the countryside were incorporated in the so-called *Agrarpolitik* (agricultural policy), which was taught to the students in agriculture at the German universities and colleges. In my own country a number of studies of rural districts were made by graduates who took their Ph.D. with Steinmetz at the University of Amsterdam. Steinmetz introduced at this university what he called *sociography*. He was a sociologist, but he had to teach human geography. He tried to give human geography a true sociological basis, and so he came to sociography. Rural districts were very well suited for sociographic studies of this type. But all these and other scientific studies of rural life in Europe were, with regard to methodology as well as to specific subjects studied, quite different from what we call rural sociology today.

Besides, much material about the social life in the countryside was brought together which did not pretend to be systematic scientific knowledge. Already during the 19th century many reports and other descriptions of rural life were published and many still remain unpublished in the archives. They constitute now valuable documents for rural history.

Thus, rural sociology in Europe did not stem from nothing, but con-

ditions for its development were less favorable than in this country.

After the war, conditions changed in many respects. You know since 1945 strong relations between European and American sociologists developed. Many Europeans came to America and many Americans went to Europe. Because sociology almost ceased in continental Europe between 1940 and 1945, and there was a hunger for the results of scientific research in the free world after the war, Europe was flooded by American sociological literature, including publications in the field of rural sociology. A great interest developed in the achievements of American sociology. This is true for sociological theory but above all for research methods. It took some years before European sociologists were able to assimilate what was brought to them from the other side of the Atlantic and to keep pace with the continuing growth of American sociology. This meant changes in the university education of sociologists—including a much stronger emphasis on statistics, for example—writing of new textbooks, changes in the organization of sociological research, and so on. In general, one can say, I think, that the assimilation of modern American sociology in Europe is now a fact. In every textbook on sociology in Europe you will find now a strong reflection of modern American sociology; in some cases so strongly that American sociologists with a good knowledge of European sociology ask themselves whether some European authors of textbooks are not forgetting that Europe made some contributions to sociology also!⁵ This integration of modern American sociology in the concepts and techniques of European sociology laid the scientific basis for the development of a modern rural sociology. Perhaps more important, however, was an important change in the attitudes of government officials in central and local governments and of other policy makers and administrators towards sociology in most European countries. The many problems which had to be solved during the years of reconstruction after the war and the growing consciousness of rapid social change led to the increasing awareness that, for the foundation of a well-balanced policy, systematic scientific knowledge of the conditions and processes in social life is indispensable. That was true also with regard to agriculture and rural life. Both experienced extremely rapid changes in Europe after the war, which created problems for the ministries of agriculture and other agencies. In almost all European countries sociologists were called to help these countries solve their difficulties. People in charge of the extension services gradually began to see that the economic problems of the farmer could not be solved by purely technical and economic approaches. They began to see that advisory work is not just a thing to be learned by trial and error

⁵ William Petersen in his criticism of J. A. A. van Doorn and C. J. Lammers, "Moderne Sociologie" (Modern Sociology), *Het Spectrum Utrecht/Antwerpen*, 1959, in *Mensch en Maatschappij* (Man and Society), vol. 34, 1960, p. 290.

only, but that the extension worker can find a sound basis for his work in scientific knowledge provided by sociology and psychology. Today it has become clear that the countryside needs a drastic physical reconstruction to adjust it to modern social, economic, and technical conditions; and physical planners feel that they cannot do the job without the help of sociology. Churches, village communities, farmers unions, and other voluntary associations in the countryside, including cooperatives, all feel a need for change or at least for a reconsideration of their own position. Often they ask the advice of sociologists. Rural family life, including problems of retirement, demands much more attention than it got formerly; and it is again the sociologist who has to find out the real character of the problems and of their causes.

Thus, in almost all countries in Western Europe sociological research in rural areas started. Even in some countries behind the Iron Curtain there is an interest in rural sociology. Poland and Yugoslavia have to be mentioned especially, but in Czechoslovakia there seems to be some interest also.

Does this mean that rural sociology in Europe is in a satisfactory state at the moment and that we can expect that it will show a continuous growth in the near future? Let me try to give you a picture of its present state so you can form your own judgment.

It seems that in Europe not much is to be expected for rural sociology from the general universities, at least as far as they do not have agricultural faculties. In the survey of rural sociology in Europe which was published by Mendras⁶ in the first issue of *Sociologia Ruralis*, he mentions only one university (the University of Stockholm) where rural sociology was taught as a separate part of a course in general sociology. I can only add that in my own country students in general sociology from other universities are permitted to come to my university, the Agricultural University of Wageningen, to take rural sociology as a part of the study for their final degree, and a number of them do so. The universities of the European continent have, in general, a strong urban background and show—much more than in America—a great resistance to the introduction of anything which could be considered as applied science.

Thus, almost the only hope in academic life for rural sociology lies with agricultural universities and colleges and faculties of agriculture in general universities. That hope certainly is not vain. In almost all Western European countries, at one or more institutes for higher education in agriculture, rural sociology is taught. But it would be a mistake to suppose that that means an education of rural sociologists. At almost all universities and colleges in question rural sociology is only given as

⁶ H. Mendras, "Les études de sociologie rurale en Europe" (Rural Sociological Studies in Europe), *Sociologia Ruralis*, 1, 1960, pp. 15-34.

an additional course to students who study technical agriculture and often those courses are optional. In most European countries higher education in agriculture shows little specialization, and in that situation a specialization in rural sociology is almost unthinkable. Besides, changes of importance in the curriculum of institutes of higher learning in Europe are difficult to bring about in general, far more difficult than in the United States.

It is only at my own university, Agricultural University at Wageningen, that a complete specialization in rural sociology is possible. Education at our university starts with a propaedeutic course which is the same for all students and takes one year. After that first year the students who take rural sociology as their specialization devote practically all their time to rural sociology and related sciences, including social psychology and rural social history. Mostly that specialization will take them about five years. When they want to take a Ph.D., they still have to write a doctor's dissertation which in the Netherlands is not a part of the final examination. Graduates who can devote themselves completely to the research for their dissertation will need at least two years, so that the complete specialization in rural sociology—with the exception of the propaedeutic year—demands at least seven years. A certain specialization in rural sociology is also possible at the Agricultural College of Norway, but it does give the opportunity for a complete education in sociology.

It will be clear that this unsatisfactory academic position of rural sociology in Europe hampers rural sociological research at the institutes for higher education. It is true that many doctor's dissertations are written by general sociologists or by graduates in related fields which touch rural sociology or are even completely devoted to sociological problems of the countryside.⁷ But what is lacking almost everywhere is an academic center where a number of scientists are devoting themselves completely and permanently to the problems of our science. Personally, I believe that this is one of the most severe handicaps of rural sociology in Europe. For a satisfactory development of a certain branch of science, places are needed where people, without being hurried, can give their full attention to theoretical problems and basic research in their field of science. Scientists in institutes for applied research have little or no opportunity to do this basic research, because they are paid to give an answer to practical questions—and quickly. In Europe basic research and theoretical study are considered primarily as a task of the universities. As to sociology, there are only a few institutes outside the universities which can do work of importance in basic research. It is true, of course, that rural sociology, for its basic theory, concepts, and methods can rely, to a large extent, on general sociology. But rural sociology has

⁷ Mendras, *op. cit.*

its own typical problems, and, therefore, it has its own special interest in certain parts of sociological theory and its own needs for basic research.⁸ Thus, the fact that there are many university institutes for general sociology in Europe which are doing excellent work does not solve the problem. My own experience in the Netherlands at least leads me to the conclusion that special academic centers for rural sociology are needed, and I believe that most of my colleagues in general sociology agree with me. To have the right effect such academic centers must be able to maintain a good communication with the research workers and research institutes outside the university. In this respect the importance of national borderlines and language barriers in Europe has to be taken into account. Notwithstanding the growing unity of Europe, each nation is still to a high degree a cultural entity of its own. For normal scientific contacts one approaches his own national universities. The language problem increases the difficulties in this respect, of course. Most European scientists speak one or more foreign languages, but there are about 15 different languages, after all, in Western Europe. Besides, speaking a foreign language almost never means that one gets into contact with foreigners as easily as with his fellow countrymen.

Thus, for a satisfactory development of rural sociological research there must be one or more academic centers in every country. It follows from the foregoing that we are still far from that ideal.

The academic position of rural sociology influences, of course, the development of rural sociological research outside the universities. The number of professional rural sociologists is still low and will be low for a rather long time. On the other hand, there is an increasing demand from government agencies and other policy-making and administrative bodies for knowledge and insight concerning the social conditions of the rural population. Thus, in almost all European countries—I mention explicitly Italy, France, Germany, and the Netherlands—applied rural sociological research of some importance is carried out. A more or less complete survey of the institutes engaged in this applied research is given in the Mendras article which I have mentioned already. Most of the research is done by general sociologists, agronomists, and graduates in related fields. Not all of them are really qualified for the job. Much good work is done, but much also should be better.

The present state of rural sociology in Europe is reflected in the characteristics of its professional organizations. In the fall of 1957 the European Society for Rural Sociology was founded by representatives of the 13 democratic countries of Western Europe. In many respects the

⁸ About the necessity and the character of basic research in rural sociology, see: E. W. Hofstee, "Fundamenteel sociologisch spuurwerk in het kader van het landbouwwetenschappelijk onderzoek" (Basic Sociological Research in the Framework of Scientific Research in Agriculture), Bulletin No. 18 of the Department of Rural Sociology of the Agricultural University of Wageningen, Wageningen, 1960.

Society was a success. It has already organized two congresses, and this year the third one will be held in Austria. The congresses attracted a great number of participants and they certainly helped to clarify the ideas about the development of rural sociology in Europe. Most important, perhaps, the congresses have furthered excellent personal relations between those who are interested in rural sociology in the various countries of Europe. But, on the other hand, the short history of the Society has shown clearly that the development of an international organization in this field has many more problems to meet than that of a national one. It will still be a number of years before our Society will be able to work in the same way as the American Rural Sociological Society does. It is noticeable that in the European Society the majority of its members do not consist of professional rural sociologists, but of people who are interested in the results of rural sociology for practical purposes. In the present situation we welcome the interest of these nonprofessionals because their membership and their participation in the congresses helps to strengthen the position of rural sociology.

The foundation of the European Society for Rural Sociology has stimulated the establishment of some national societies for rural sociology working in close cooperation with the European Society. There is, at the moment, a national society in Norway and one in Italy. The Italian society in particular shows a great activity.

Though not a professional society, I want to mention here the Working Party for Rural Sociological Problems in Europe of the F.A.O. The desirability of a special working party devoted to the problems of rural life in Europe was expressed in a resolution of the F.A.O. European Rural Life Conference at Bad Godesberg (Germany) in 1957. In fact, the Working Party came into being at about the same time as the European Society for Rural Sociology, and from the beginning there has existed a close cooperation between the two organizations. Several of the leading personalities in the European Society are at the same time taking part in the Working Party. It has already become a custom to organize the meetings of the Working Party at the same place and at the same time as the congresses of the European Society. The Working Party is an agency working at the national government level, and most of the Western European governments (not all) send their representatives to its meetings. I.L.O., O.E.C.D., UNESCO, and other international organizations are represented in the meetings of the Working Party also. The Working Party discusses projects for cross-national rural sociological research and other subjects concerning the development of applied research in our field in Europe. The work of the Working Party is hampered by lack of money and manpower to carry out the projects it plans. Some small projects were paid by the F.A.O. and were carried out partly by the European Society. Some were paid by national gov-

ernments, but it is very difficult to convince national governments and international organizations that they should make money available for this type of cross-national research.

The existing conditions in Europe make themselves felt also in the problem of the publication of journals in the field of rural sociology. At the foundation of the European Society for Rural Sociology it was decided that the Society should publish an international journal in the field of rural sociology. It was not until 1960 that the first issue of *Sociologia Ruralis* was published. After the publication of the first two issues many difficulties have been met. In the main these have come from the shortcomings which international communication with regard to scientific matters in Europe still shows. We hope to solve the problems and to continue the publication, but it will still be several years before the journal can acquire the same position as *Rural Sociology* has in the United States. Next to *Sociologia Ruralis* a number of national journals are published which are wholly or partly devoted to rural sociology. In Belgium *Les Cahiers Ruraux* (Rural Scripts), a quarterly journal devoted to economics, sociology, demography, and culture of the countryside, has been published for about 10 years. In Germany *Zeitschrift für Agrargeschichte und Agrarsoziologie* (Journal for Rural History and Rural Sociology) exists which is published irregularly and is not of much importance for rural sociology. In 1961, the Italian Society for Rural Sociology started the publication of *Quaderni di Sociologia Ruralis* (a quarterly Journal for Rural Sociology). It is interested not only in the problems of Italy but of the whole world. The third issue, for example, was exclusively devoted to the problems of Latin America. In the same year in France a journal called *Etudes Rurales* (Rural Studies) came into being. It also is issued four times a year and devoted to history, geography, sociology, and economics of the countryside.

Summarizing this survey of the present state of rural sociology in Europe, our conclusion has to be that after World War II rural sociology showed a rapid and, in many respects, promising development. This development originates primarily from the strongly increased demand for rural sociological information. The development, however, is seriously hampered by the unsatisfactory academic position of rural sociology and by the difficulties of international scientific communication in Europe.

Before ending my paper I should like to make a few remarks on the fundamental scientific starting points of rural sociology in Europe. As I mentioned in the beginning, the influence of modern American sociology in general, and modern American rural sociology in particular, was of primary importance for the development of rural sociology in Europe. Does this mean that rural sociology in Europe follows the same line as in America and will follow the same line in the future? Partly it will,

partly it will not, I believe. When I am thinking of a possible, somewhat deviating, development of rural sociology in Europe, I am not thinking of people in Europe who still think that rural sociology should be a kind of sophisticated glorification of the countryside. You have had, I believe, the same type here and they disappeared. They will disappear also in Europe. Their number is already declining. I am thinking of the unavoidable necessity for European rural sociologists to take into account in their studies culture as an important and, in many respects, independent variable. American sociological research, including rural sociological research, as far as American society is concerned, is based on the assumption that it has to do with a mass society. That means the assumption is that everywhere in the United States the culture, with the exception of a few pockets, is basically the same, so culture does not come in as an independent variable. Cultural differences, according to this point of view, can be seen as dependent on other social characteristics like class, degree of urbanization, age, etc., and can be explained by them. When an American social scientist hears about a social group which is characterized by its own deviating culture or subculture which cannot be explained by other social or economic traits, he tends to think in terms of folk societies and is inclined to leave the study of this group to the anthropologist. Perhaps when he is a teacher he will be glad to have a group with a deviating culture, for example, like the Amish, in the neighborhood of his university to show his students the difference between mass society and folk society, but the problem of the deviating culture is essentially not his problem. Perhaps you will have the feeling that I am exaggerating a little, and perhaps I do. But you will have to admit that seldom or never⁹ do American rural sociologists discuss in their bulletins, articles, etc., the culture or subculture of the special group they investigate when this group is not clearly culturally or geographically isolated. When they do not do so, it can only mean that they believe it is not necessary.

I am not discussing here whether for America this starting point is right, though I have my doubts. But for Europe it is definitely wrong. In Europe, not only between the different nations but also between an infinite number of regional and even local groups within every country, there are differences in culture, which influence the behavior of those groups considerably. These cultural differences, of course, do not come from nothing, but their origin mostly goes back so far in history and is so difficult to trace that the sociologist can only accept them as a given fact. I want to emphasize that it would be wrong to associate this fact with a possible prevalence of traditional peasant societies in Europe. It

⁹ There are exceptions, of course. I am thinking of C. R. Hoffer, "Acceptance of Approved Farm Practices among Farmers of Dutch Descent," East Lansing: Michigan Agr. Exp. Sta., Special Bulletin 316, 1942.

is true, of course, that such peasant groups still exist, in particular in southern and southeastern Europe. But I am thinking of groups of farmers in northwestern Europe, and of the Netherlands in particular, who show clearly a modern mentality, as, for example, the farmers in the Dutch provinces of Friesland and Groningen. The farmers in these regions already had a modern mentality in all respects in the 19th century.

It is self-evident that this fact has important consequences for sociological research. When we in Europe study, for example, a certain phenomenon of a general character like the acceptance of modern farm practices in a certain region, we have to take into account not only general factors like size of farm, level of education, age of the farmer, degree of urbanization, etc., but also the specific cultural conditions in the region in question. This means that this regional culture has to be studied and that we have to be very cautious when we try to draw generalizations. We have to try first to eliminate these regional cultural factors before possible generalizations can be of real value. You will find a reflection already of this difficulty in the doctor's dissertation of Bruno Benvenuti, who took his doctor's degree at Wageningen University last year (*Farming in Cultural Change*). Benvenuti had to write a special, lengthy chapter on the typical socio-cultural characteristics of the rural community in which he made his investigation. In the forthcoming dissertations of Bergsma and van den Ban (who will take their Ph.D's at Wageningen in the coming year) you will see that they had to cope with the same problem.

You may remark that even if important local and regional differences in culture can coexist with a modern society, these differences will tend to diminish and in the end they will disappear. Probably this is right. But it will take a long time before Europe will show the same basic culture everywhere, and I must say that, from a personal point of view, I hope that it will take a very long time. But, in the meantime, rural sociological research has to be done. That means, in my opinion, that rural sociology in Europe will be different in some respects from rural sociology as it now is in America. As I have pointed out already, it will be more difficult to draw general conclusions from a single piece of research. We shall be still more afraid than you are of sweeping generalizations. The fact of cultural differences compels us to study them. That study will partly be of a general character; we shall have to come to certain general conclusions as to the influence of cultural differences in social behavior. In addition, however, we shall have to study the separate cultures of various groups to be able to understand the social life of those separate social groups in particular. This means, according to American terminology, there will be a strong element of anthropology in European rural sociology. That will make you afraid, perhaps, of

the possibility that in European rural sociology qualitative description instead of exact knowledge on a statistical basis will prevail. It is a well-known fact that anthropologists tend far more to statements of a qualitative character than modern sociology does. Indeed, I suppose that there will be a stronger tendency to qualitative description in European rural sociology. But it is my hope that a specific contribution of European rural sociology to the social sciences in general will be the development and the use of modern sociological methods for the study and the analysis of cultural differences of social groups, so that their cultural characteristics can be recorded and analyzed in an exact way. During the last few years we experimented in this direction in our department at Wageningen and I believe not without success.

At the moment, European rural sociology is heavily indebted to American rural sociology, and perhaps in the end this mental Marshall Aid will be as effective as the material one has been, so that we can enrich one another.