

GREY AND PLEASANT LAND?

An Interdisciplinary Exploration of the Connectivity of Older People in Rural Civic Society

Professor Catherine Hennessy
(University of Plymouth)

&

Professor Robin Means
(University of the West of England)

On behalf of the research teams from Bournemouth,
Cardiff, Plymouth, Swansea and UWE

The background to the proposal

COPY

The Development of an Interdisciplinary Rural Ageing Research Agenda Using the OPeRA Network'

(Older People in Rural Areas)

- **Aim:** to build on the capacity of OPeRA, an applied research collaboration launched in 2006 between three universities in South West England (Bournemouth University, University of Plymouth and University of the West of England) to create an interdisciplinary research programme on rural ageing.

Activities of NDA Preparatory Network on Rural Ageing

- Conducting an interdisciplinary review of the research literature on older rural people and civic society (e.g. older people's contributions to social and cultural capital and barriers and facilitators to social inclusion in rural settings)
- Consulting with an Older People's Panel of rural residents through face-to-face and 'virtual' meetings
- Recruiting the participation of additional academic (Universities of Cardiff, Swansea and Alberta, Canada) and non academic partners
- Preparing an interdisciplinary CRP bid to the NDA programme targeting areas covered by the ESRC, AHRC and EPSRC

Grey and Pleasant Land?

'An interdisciplinary exploration of the connectivity of older people in rural civic society'

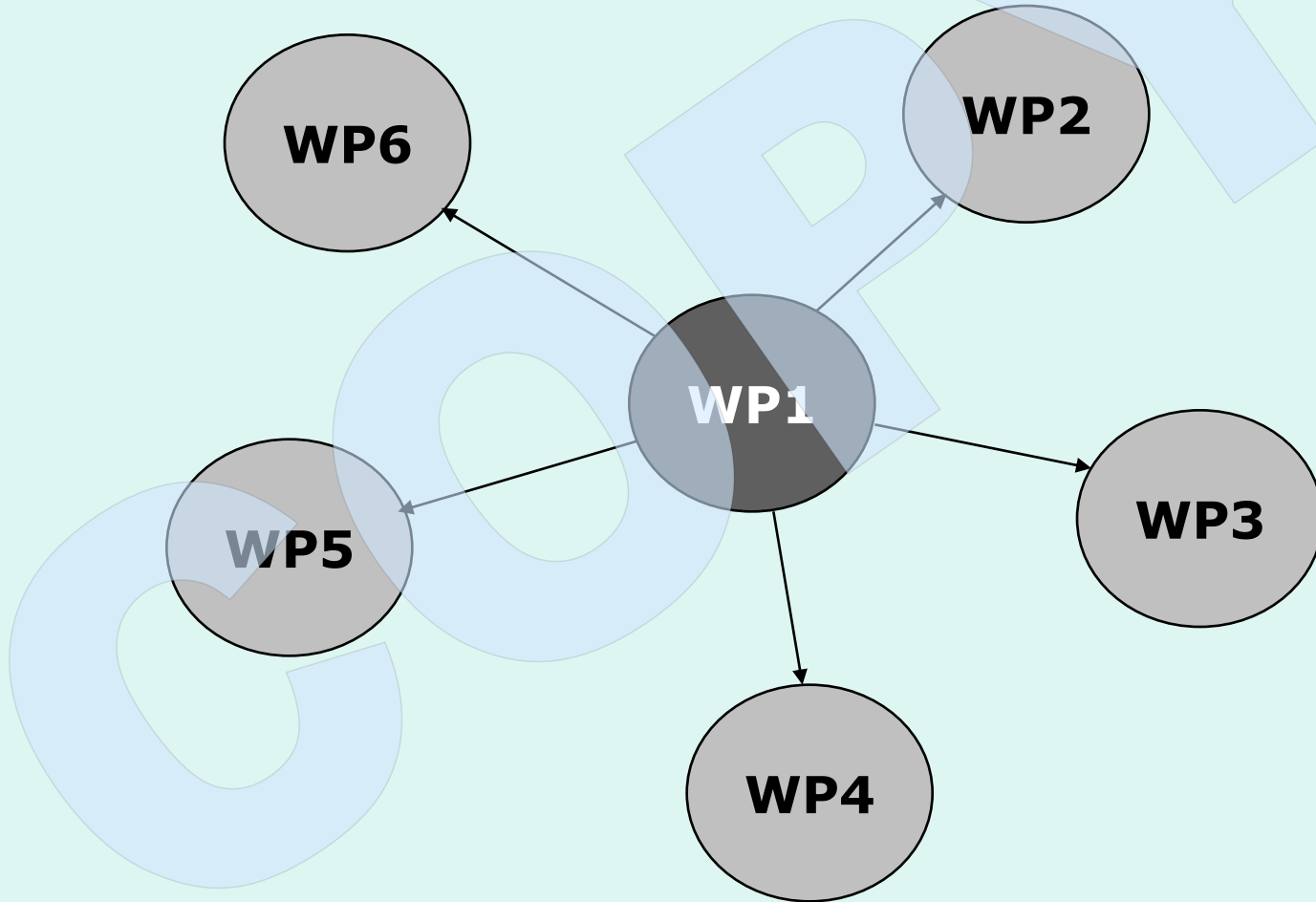
- How and in what ways are older people connected to civic society in rural settings in England and Wales?
- What is the impact of this connectivity on older people's quality of life in rural areas?
- How is later life experienced across diverse rural contexts and within subgroups of older people?
- How can novel interdisciplinary approaches be used to capture and disseminate evidence about older people's participation in and contributions to rural civic society, i.e. as a source of rural community capital?

Programme Work Packages

The Connectivity of Older People in Rural Areas: An Overview (WP1)

- Using existing national and other relevant datasets and collecting new primary survey data to investigate social, spatial, technological and cultural connectivities and their relationship to civic involvement among persons aged 60+
- These data sets will serve to create a common conceptual core for the programme as a whole and as a platform for additional data collection in each of the other WPs
- A total sample of 1,200 older persons will be interviewed in six rural areas in South West England and Wales

Fieldwork



Programme Work Packages

The Cultural Third Age: Understanding the Role of Cultural Activities in Active Ageing and Intergenerational Relations (WP2)

- WP2 will examine the role of cultural and leisure activities in active ageing through an intergenerational oral history project designed to promote awareness of older people's contributions to community cultural capital
- Qualitative biographical accounts of older people's participation in cultural and leisure activities will be used with WP1 primary survey data to address research questions regarding life-course patterns of involvement in cultural activities and leisure pursuits and as the basis for a community oral history project, interactive website and museum exhibition co-created with the project participants

Programme Work Packages

Travelling Through the Rural Life-course (WP3)

- WP3 aims to increase our understanding of older persons' physical connectivity in relation to their transport and other mobility needs in rural areas and the goal of achieving sustainable rural communities
- Biographical methods (mobility biographies, social network analysis and phenomenology) and survey data are being used to investigate older persons' behaviours, perceptions and meanings related to their physical connectedness and access to their rural communities

Programme Work Packages

Film and Performance: Changing Patterns of Connectivity in Rural Place, Space and Identity (WP4)

- WP4 includes two projects which use tools from the arts to examine how older people experience connectivity, rural place and space and identity. It focuses on the experiences and perceptions of rural living among older residents including those whose lifestyles may not fit existing community norms and/or remain invisible and disconnected
- Project 1 is investigating the connectivity experienced by gay and lesbian older people residing in rural settings while Project 2 explores older rural residents' conceptions of the physical, social and cultural landscapes in which they locate themselves, focussing on issues of memory, place and identity and their relationship to the ageing experience
- Arts-based outputs from this WP include a film, website and multi-media book-based publication

Programme Work Packages

The Well Being and Welfare of Older People in Rural Areas (WP5)

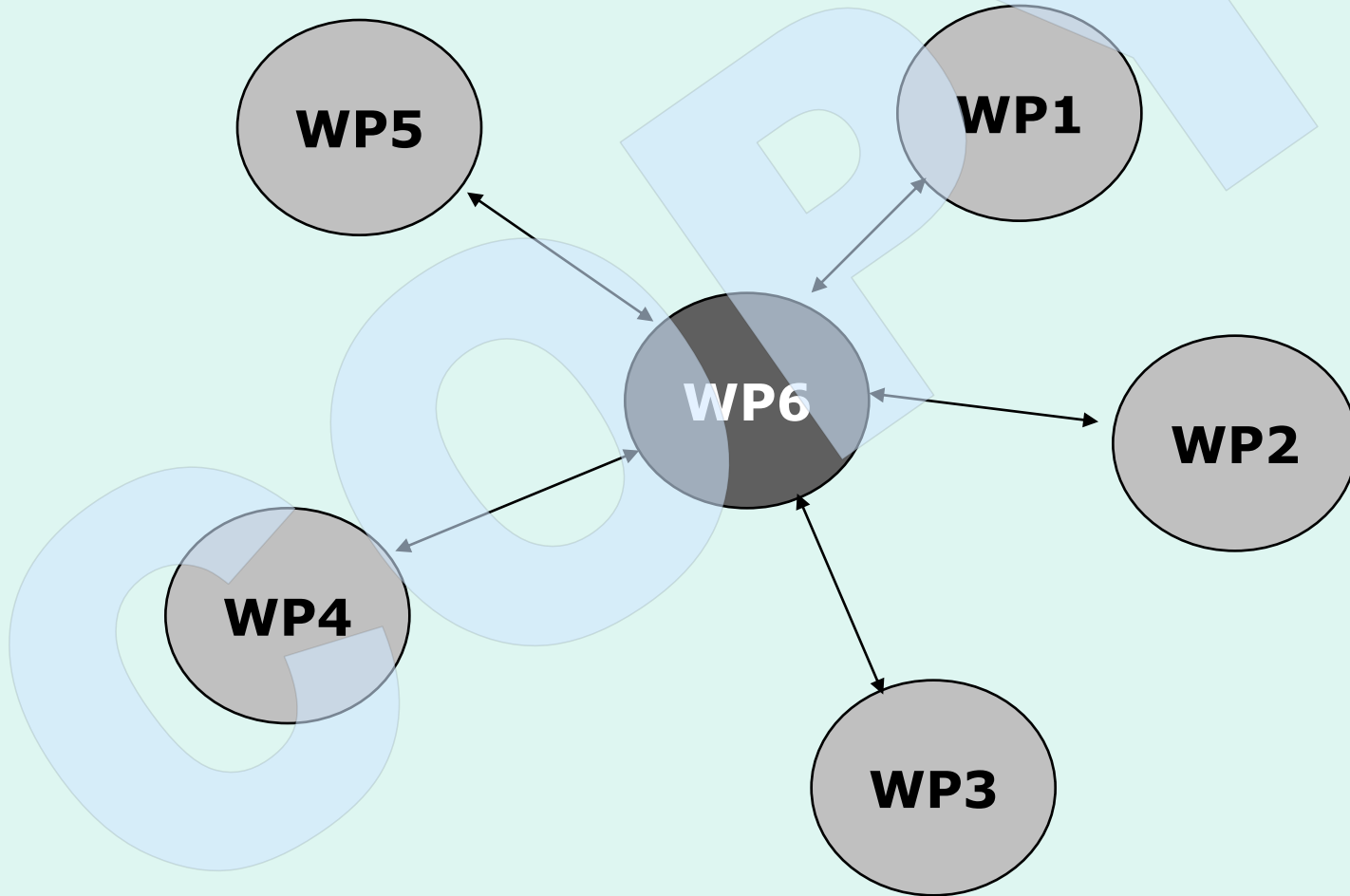
- WP5 will use primary survey data from WP1 and ethnographic methods to investigate problematic aspects of rural living among older persons through examining the nature and extent of material deprivations experienced in low-income households in the study areas and the relationship between these deprivations, connectivity and social capital

Programme Work Packages

Using the Internet to Connect Stakeholders in Rural Ageing (WP6)

- WP6 builds on the involvement of collaborating stakeholder groups in this research (older rural persons panels, non-academic partner organisations and international academic experts in rural ageing) to explore stakeholder views on quality of life issues for older rural people
- The project will use web-based computer methods (e.g. webcasts, video conferencing, chat rooms) to enable connectivity among these groups and to investigate older rural persons' use and experiences of communication technology

Dissemination



Programme Work Packages

Managing Interdisciplinary Research Connectivity (WP7)

- WP7 will coordinate and synthesise the individual programme research findings into a coherent overall account of older people's involvement in rural civic society
- It will also investigate the interdisciplinary research process through qualitative analysis of research team meeting proceedings and contributions of the WPs and disciplines to a programme web-based knowledge management system ('wiki') through which interdisciplinary theory is developed

Interdisciplinary Management

