



# RURAL AGEING AND EQUALITY

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# Outline

- Nancy Fraser's framework of inequality
- Review: rurality, resources, recognition, representation
- Grey and Pleasant Land? An interdisciplinary exploration of the connectivity of older people in rural civic society (GaPL)
- Results of analysis exploring intersectionality
- Conclusions and future research

## Nancy Fraser's framework of inequality

- Nancy Fraser is a critical theorist, feminist and Prof of Political and Social Science at The New School in New York City.
- Approaches feminism within a capitalist society from three inter-related dimensions:  
distribution of resources (economic); recognition (social status, cultural visibility and cultural worth) and representation (social and political participation and access to justice)
- Intersectionality: think 'triple jeopardy' (older black women).
- Diversity: class, gender/gender identity, age, sexuality/sexual identity, dis/ability, 'race', ethnicity, religion and location.





## Ageing in rural locations

- > 30 definitions of rurality used by different institutions in the UK
- Geographers' early conceptualisations of rural communities included physical “morphological accounts of landscape, settlement and house types” but these representations of rural settlements were “eerily still, silent and devoid of people” (Philo 1992).
- Social relationships, *gemeinschaft*, morphological continuum, rural idyll
- Sparsity and proximity to urban areas
- Population turnover (resource poor/gentrification)

## Ageing in rural locations

- Post-modern diversity
- Cluster of variables to define settlement types:
  - ❖ Social, cultural, political and economic differences;
  - ❖ Lifestyles of residents (e.g. retirement areas or commuting zones);
  - ❖ Population size
  - ❖ Population turnover or stability
  - ❖ Distance from other settlements, key services, employment opportunities (e.g. IMD)
  - ❖ Proportion of younger or older adults in the population.
- Community characteristics may in turn influence the resources, recognition and representation of older individuals residing within a particular rural area



## Rural ageing and resources

- Research on ageing and inequalities has tended to focus on urban deprived areas. Exclusion, deprivation and inequalities in distribution of resources among older people living in rural areas have been under-explored
- Material inequalities in later life are related to age, gender, marital status, living arrangements, ethnicity, transitions in work status and to retirement and location in terms of degree of rurality (and other associated characteristics)
- Little evidence to increase knowledge and understanding of the intersectionality of these factors.





## Rural ageing and resources

- Rural poverty of older people has been contrasted with rural affluence.
- Older people in rural areas have been depicted as one of the most affluent groups in society with high levels of disposable income. In the UK, it has been estimated that the population comprising people aged 50+ years hold 80 per cent of the wealth
- The 'affluence' of older people in rural areas should be treated with caution. Recent research has shown over one-fifth of rural respondents were reliant on the state pension as the sole source of income.



## Rural ageing and recognition

- Social exclusion is defined as the dynamic processes of being excluded from key systems and institutions that can shape the economic and social integration of people within
- Certain social processes may deny older people full participation within society
- Difficulties in establishing and maintaining social relations. Locational characteristics are related to population change that impact on social relationships.





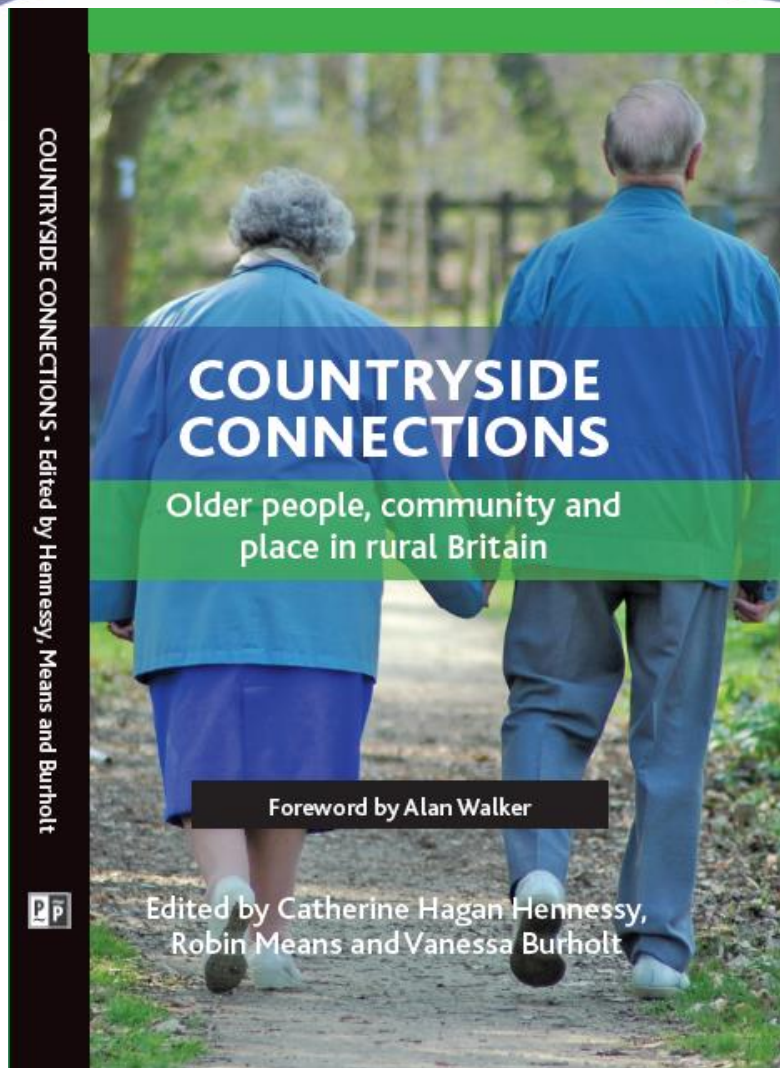
## Rural ageing and recognition

- Older people are often portrayed as welfare recipients and their contributions to rural communities are overlooked
- Support networks may provide a source of personal care, transport or financial assistance for older people living in rural areas
- The informal practices of older people can improve inclusivity in rural settlements and help address inequalities in access to formal services in some rural locations
- If the status of older people in rural society constitutes them as less than full partners in social relations and social participation (based on geographical location, age *and* gender, disability, race and sexuality), it institutionalizes ageist “misrecognition”



## Rural ageing and representation

- A paucity of studies exploring civic participation
- Civic engagement as “individual and collective actions wherein older adults participate in activities of personal and public concern that are both individually life enriching and socially beneficial to the community” and “socially oriented sharing of individual resources”
- Older people are important sources of social capital reciprocity and trust are generated in rural areas through older people’s engagement in local activities and local groups
- ‘Representation’ to refer to civic participation of older people, but also the ways in which civic society, politics and policies reflect the desires and needs of older people living in rural areas.



Grey and Pleasant Land? An interdisciplinary exploration of the connectivity of older people in rural civic society (GaPL)

Funded through the New Dynamics of Ageing Programme (ESRC)

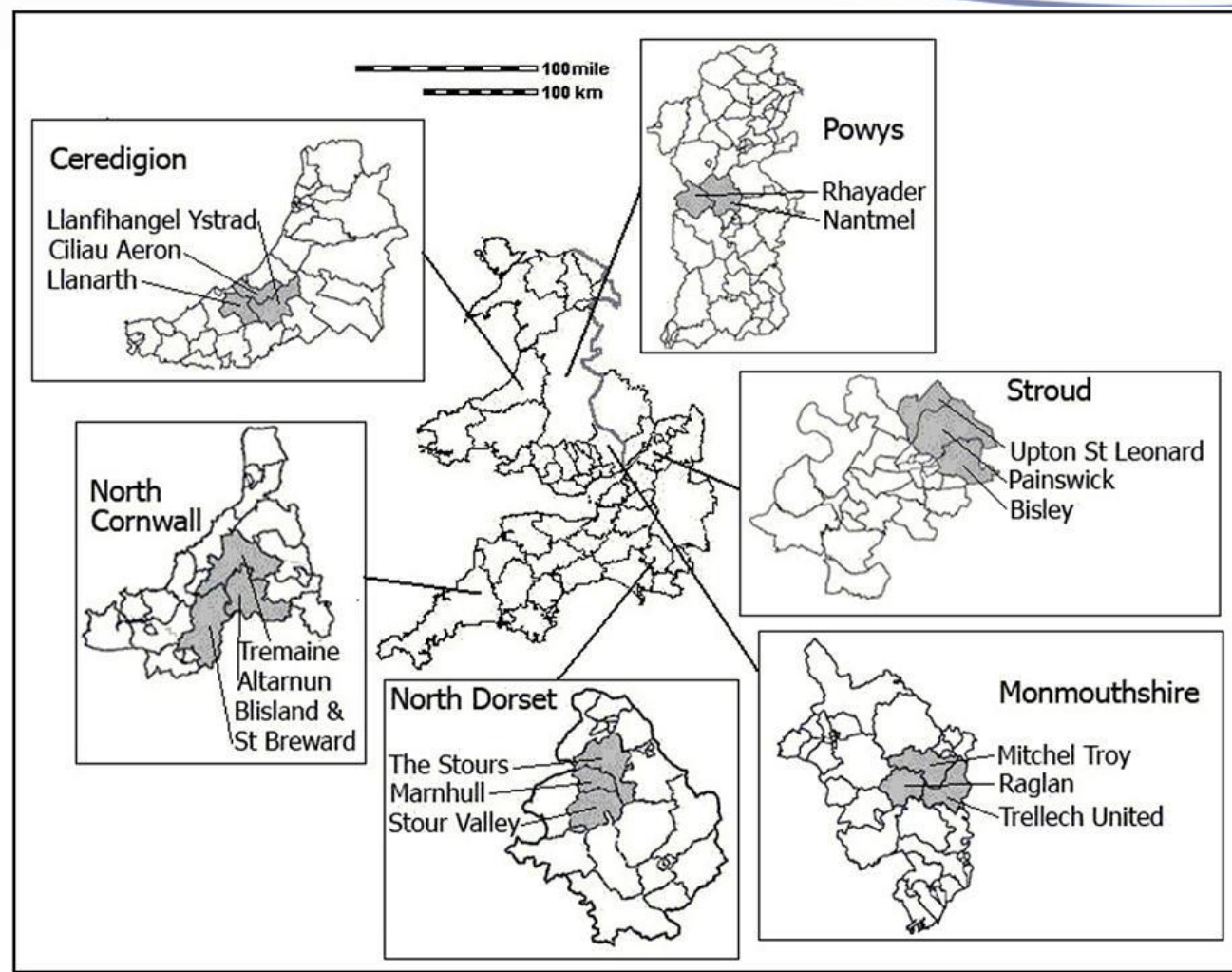
PI: Catherine Hennessy



## Grey and Pleasant Land: rural communities

- *Type A – remote and deprived*: remote, low incomes, ‘indigenous’, some tourism influence, house prices high relative to income, small dispersed settlements, marginal agriculture, ageing population. These hold many of the characteristics of Defra’s Rural 80 settlements.
- *Type B – less remote and deprived*: less remote, but clearly rural, middle incomes, diversifying economy, some commuting, moderate house prices relative to incomes. These hold many of the characteristics of Defra’s Rural 50 settlements.
- *Type C – relatively affluent and accessible*: within the influence of the city region, low importance of agriculture and tourism, but a high incidence of commuting for work and affluent. These hold many of the characteristics of Defra’s Significant Rural settlements.







# Sample

- 869 participants with no missing data for any of the variables used in the analysis.
- Mean age 71.5 years (SD 8.2).
- A majority were female (59.5%), with fewer male participants (40.5%).
- Most were married (69.6%) and more than one-fifth were widowed (20.9%). Only 3.7% of participants had never married and 5.6% were divorced or separated.





## Dependent variables: resources

- *Material resources*: 6 items capturing elements of employment status and private investment, (Burholt & Windle 2006). Scores range from 0 to 5 with zero representing no more than basic material resources (e.g. state pension only or below) and 5 representing excellent material resources. Mean 2.4 (SD 1.2)
- *Poverty*: Necessities of daily living: able to afford to make regular savings, keep the home in decorated, replace worn out furniture and electrical goods, have a small amount of money to spend on themselves each week, and have a holiday away from home once a year. Scores range from 0 to 5 with lower scores indicating greater levels of poverty (Gordon et al. 2000; Scharf et al. 2002). Mean 5.0 (SD 1.4)



## Dependent variables: recognition

- *Social resources*: Lubben Social Network Scale (LSNS-6) (Lubben et al. 2006). Scores range from 0 to 30 with greater scores indicating greater social resources. Mean 22.2 (SD 9.1)
- *Social participation*: Count of participation in a range of 14 leisure activities with other. Scores range from 0 to 14 with lower scores indicating lower levels of social participation. Mean 2.8 (SD 2.4)



## Dependent variables: representation

- *Civic participation*: Count of participation in a range of civic activities. Scores range from 0 to 11 with greater scores indicating greater civic participation. Mean 1.4 (SD 1.7)
- *Trust in officials*: range of officials (e.g. local government, police). Level of trust on a 5-point scale from very dishonest (-2) to very honest (2) with 0 neutral. A single average score for level of trust. Higher scores indicated a greater level of trust. Mean 0.8 (SD 0.5).
- *Local concerns*: 16 potential community issues included: farming practices, loss of jobs, rural landscape, people moving into the area, and traffic congestion. Level of concern - from not concerned (1) to very concerned (3). A single average score for level of concern (range 0-3). Higher scores indicated a greater level of concern. Mean 1.4 (SD 1.7).



## Independent variables

- Age
- Gender
- Marital status (married ref, widowed, never married, divorced/separated)
- *Self assessed health*: single item rated over the last four weeks from very good (1) to very poor (5)
- *Disability*: single item rating how often physical problems interfered with usual physical activities over the last four weeks from not at all (1) to could not do any physical activity (5)



## Regression models: analyses

- Seven regression models: demographic variables in step 1 (age, gender, marital status, health and disability); rural area type in step 2; interaction between demographic variables and area type in step 3. Interaction terms did not increase the explained variance and were on the whole insignificant. Therefore step 3 omitted in these preliminary models
- Overall the amount of variance explained is low (but models are significant), and inequality can be explained in part by the independent variables
- NB education/class missing in this preliminary analysis.



## Regression models: resources

|                    | Material<br>resources | Poverty  |
|--------------------|-----------------------|----------|
|                    | $\beta$               | $\beta$  |
| Age                | -0.25***              | 0.02     |
| Gender             | 0.16***               | 0.04     |
| Health             | -0.16***              | -0.19*** |
| Disability         | -0.04                 | -0.04    |
| Never Married      | 0.07*                 | 0.01     |
| Widowed            | 0.00                  | -0.15*** |
| Divorced           | -0.01                 | -0.14*** |
| Area A             | -0.11**               | -0.12**  |
| Area B             | 0.00                  | -0.11**  |
| Adj R <sup>2</sup> | 0.16                  | 0.10     |

Note \*p≤.05. \*\*p≤.01. \*\*\*p≤.001





## Regression models: recognition

|                    | Social<br>resources | Social<br>participation |
|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
|                    | $\beta$             | $\beta$                 |
| Age                | -0.06               | -0.14***                |
| Gender             | -0.07               | -0.04                   |
| Health             | -0.05               | -0.1*                   |
| Disability         | -0.04               | -0.00                   |
| Never Married      | -0.17***            | -0.11***                |
| Widowed            | -0.01               | -0.21***                |
| Divorced           | -0.09**             | -0.14**                 |
| Area A             | -0.11**             | -0.08*                  |
| Area B             | -0.11**             | -0.16***                |
| Adj R <sup>2</sup> | 0.05                | 0.13                    |

Note \*p≤.05. \*\*p≤.01. \*\*\*p≤.001



## Regression models: representation

|                    | Civic<br>participation<br>$\beta$ | Local<br>concerns<br>$\beta$ | Trust in<br>officials<br>$\beta$ |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Age                | -0.06                             | -0.22***                     | -0.09*                           |
| Gender             | -0.01                             | 0.04                         | 0.03                             |
| Health             | -0.03                             | 0.10*                        | -0.07                            |
| Disability         | 0.02                              | 0.07                         | -0.03                            |
| Never Married      | -0.09*                            | -0.01                        | 0.00                             |
| Widowed            | -0.07                             | 0.01                         | 0.01                             |
| Divorced           | -0.07*                            | 0.01                         | -0.04                            |
| Area A             | -0.13***                          | 0.13***                      | -0.08*                           |
| Area B             | -0.00                             | 0.10**                       | -0.00                            |
| Adj R <sup>2</sup> | 0.03                              | 0.07                         | 0.02                             |

Note \*p≤.05. \*\*p≤.01. \*\*\*p≤.001



## Conclusions and interactive discussion

- No evidence (yet) of intersectionality of rurality with age, gender or disability, interaction terms did not improve the models
- Urbancentrism: Consistently, most remote rural area most disadvantaged: < material resources, > poverty, < social resources, < social participation, < civic engagement, > local concerns, < trust in officials
- Ageism: not consistent (but mostly) more disadvantaged at older ages: < material resources, < social resources, < social participation, < civic engagement, < trust in officials (no difference in poverty and < local concerns).



## Conclusions and interactive discussion

- Sexism: only in relation to resources. Women < material resources than men.
- Disabilism: not consistent, but poor self-assessed health < material resources, < social participation, > local concerns. Disability is probably a poor measure and we may remove this from subsequent models
- Still to examine inequalities by class
- Future research required on influence of ethnicity, sexual identity and other under-represented groups on inequality and rural ageing.