

Innovation Hub 13 – fast track to transfer



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Social innovations by elderly people – New perspectives for rural regions?

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Research Subjects

- Elderly people
 - 60 years old or older (age); person is retired (position on the labor market); person has a grandchild or several grandchildren (social role) (World Health Organization)
- Social innovations
 - Newly recombined and variegated knowledge and practices
 - Certain degree of novelty
 - Deviate from customary forms of action
 - must be implemented in practice, institutionalized, and spread spatially
 - Analytical vs. normative term
 - Communicative constructs that influence spatial transformations



A Focused Ethnography for Analyzing Social Innovations by Elderlies

Participant Observations



Qualitative Interviews



Household Survey

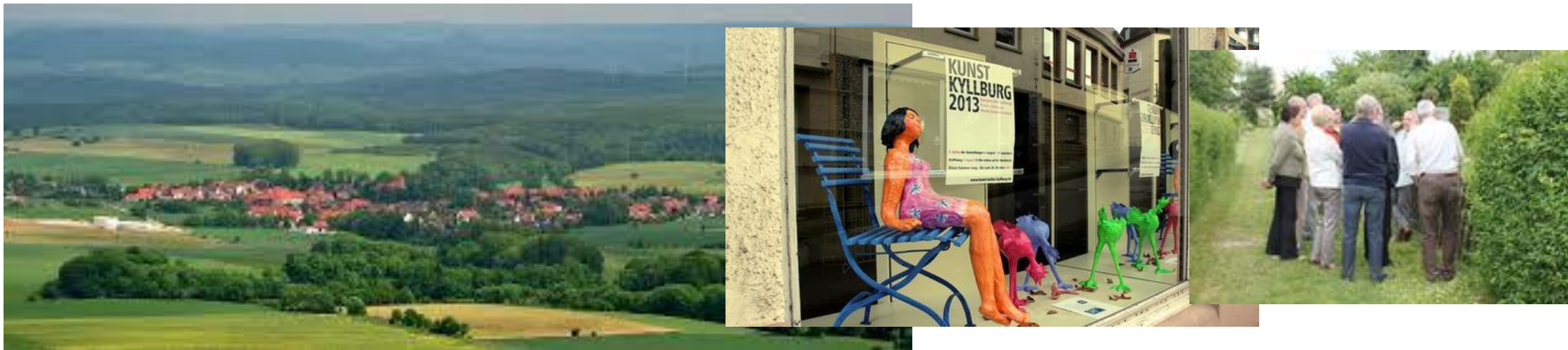
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Document Analysis





Elderly People and Innovative Projects





An Elderly Mayor in Rural Western Germany

- Andreas Fellner, elderly (66 years old, retired, grandfather) mayor of rural Kremmen
 - High percentage of vacancy and an atmosphere of resignation in the peripheral rural Eifel region
- Fellner as incubator for new ideas and key figure
 - Launched an art and culture initiative in 2012
 - Intermediary who connects heterogeneous actors, mobilizes them, translated complex issues between them and mediates potential conflicts
 - Set up a positive discourse about Kremmen in the media
- Spatial Transformations
 - Managed to build a critical mass needed for change and initiated spatial transformations
 - Replacing the temporary uses of art with permanent and sustainable commercial shop concepts
 - Model for the successful revitalisation of rural regions



An Elderly Village Caretaker in Rural Brandenburg

- Gustav Brinker, elderly village caretaker, (70 years old, retired, grandfather)
 - High (long-term) unemployment rate; young, well educated people left the peripheral rural village
 - Project “village caretaker” initiated in 2012
 - Project “engaged citizen for Breitenbach” with a community garden, a village kitchen, and a village workshop was established
 - Reopening of the village shop was not successful
- Brinker could not establish as key figure
 - Resigned after two years of local engagement
 - Low local cultural identification
 - Did not take advantage of his position as village caretaker
- Frustration, lethargy and conflicts limit chances for spatial transformations
 - Communication problems, divergent attitudes and inter-personal conflicts



Elderly People as Innovators in Rural Regions

- Theoretical studies on and ethnographic investigations of rural social innovations by elderly rare
- Elderly can act as key figures depending on...
 - Personal attributes
 - Network capacities
 - Social recognition
 - Adaptation to local cultural structures
- Certain potential of elderly people as incubators for social innovations
 - Practical relevance for regions affected by demographic changings and aging populations
 - Enhances theories on social innovation agency
 - Inductive research needs deeper understanding

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