

German Rural Fieldsite

Tatjana Thelen

Location of the fieldsite

The rural community of about 4000 inhabitants exhibits characteristics of both a very rural region (basic structure, old farms, cash crop production and private gardens, tourism) as well as those of a small town (centralised infrastructure, state of many buildings, small business). It can be seen as typical for many villages in Brandenburg lying in close proximity to Berlin and Potsdam, characterised by a high percentage of commuters and at the same time clearly not part of the suburban belt. Previously structurally independent, the community was incorporated administratively into the next closest city in the course of an administrative reform on January 1st, 2002.

Population

The residents are a heterogeneous mixture of older settlers, post-1945 newcomers, post-1990 settlers and small and mid-sized (hobby) farms and tradesmen. The local birth rate is in agreement with the national trend. After having stagnated in the early part of the 1990s it rose again and has been constant for the last five years. The local Social Services Office noted explicitly that the birth pyramid shows a marked female surplus.



View of the village (photo: Tatjana Thelen)



Buffet at local association (photo: Tatjana Thelen)



Invention of tradition (photo: Tatjana Thelen)

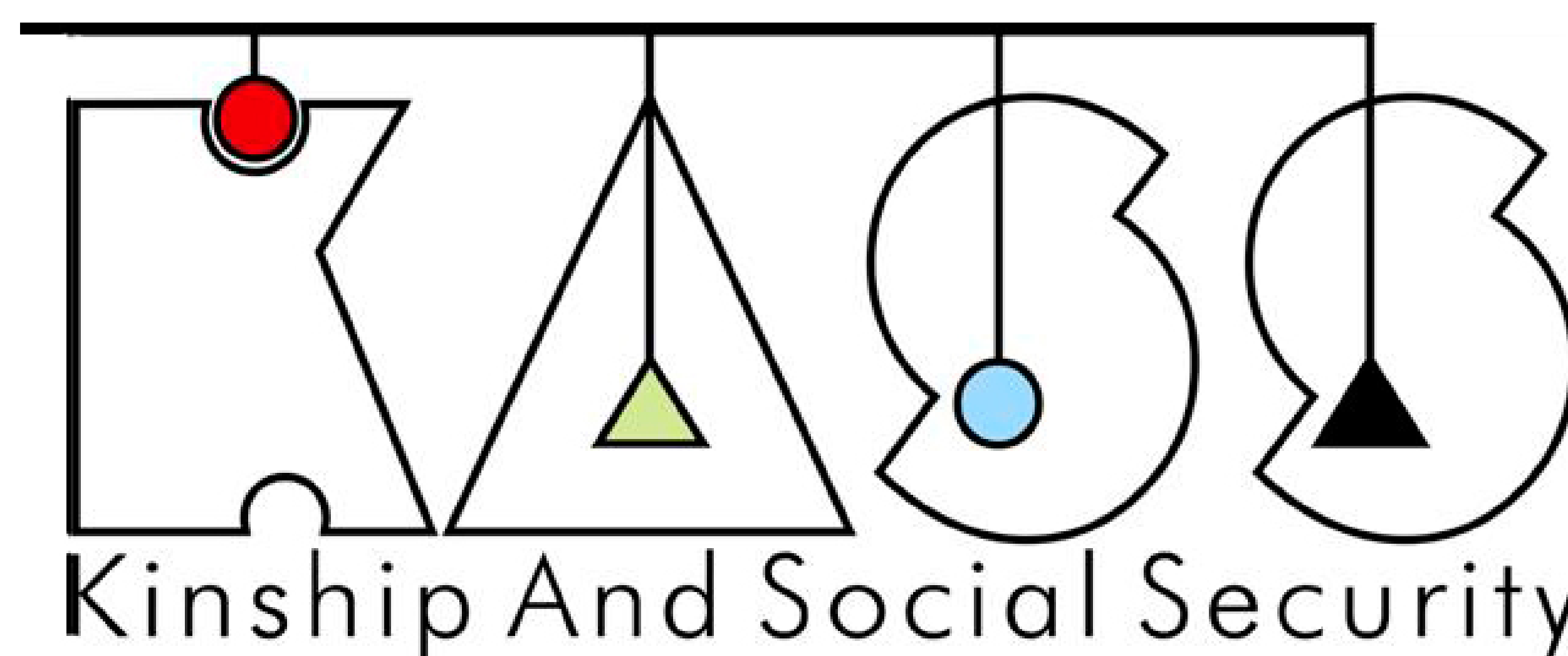


Economic development

The economic structure of the town has seen much change since 1990. Up to that time, most residents were employed in one of three sectors: in agriculture and fruit production, in mid-scale industry in the nearby city and in the trades and agro-technical construction. Since then, employment has increased in the trades and technical spheres and in the retail and service industries in the nearby city and in Berlin and to a certain degree in tourism. Newly founded horticultural enterprises also provide a certain degree of employment. As a result of the high number of commuters and early diversification after 1990, the unemployment figures in the district are with 11.9% comparatively low.

Kinship and transfer/assistance

As a result of the heterogeneous settlement pattern, family and kinship ties are quite differentiated. Especially in the case of the newcomers, they often spread also beyond the county. For families with a more localized background inheritance of houses is of great importance. Gender roles are rather "traditional" in the sense that women take most of the caring responsibilities.



An interdisciplinary project with an anthropological agenda funded by the European Union's Sixth Framework Programme.

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Layout: Kristin Magnucki, Oliver Wehmann
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