

Title: (Net)working out poverty and social exclusion in rural Ireland and Russia
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Abstract:

This thesis uncovers complexity of poverty experiences and mechanisms contributing to social exclusion of people living in rural Ireland and Russia, as well as explores the relationship between rural poverty and policies which are supposed to deal with it. It uses networked approach to understanding rural social malaise. The emphasis is given to the explanation of network processes through which poverty and otherness are constructed within a multiplicity of spheres, including social, cultural and political domains. Drawing on empirical research presenting comparative narratives of rural poverty in three villages in Ireland and Russia this research goes beyond an examination of specific "poor" and "excluded" people, in order to consider the processes of impoverishment and marginalisation. At the same time, the thesis investigates the ways in which different knowledge and power, which are enacted in rural policies, transform and translate experiential meanings of poverty. Interpretation and critiques of current rural policy-making, which fails to address poverty-related issues, promote the need to move away from rational and logical policies which produce oversimplified, trivialised and de-sensitised constructions of poverty and otherness. Instead, the thesis refers to different postmodern and post structural approaches to poverty and otherness which allow a more hybrid and complex understanding of these phenomena. It argues that fluid, sensuous and poetic politics of difference could broaden and deepen understanding of poverty and contribute to the alleviation of poverty-related problems. In conclusion, this thesis suggests the ways in which this research can be incorporated in existing policy practices. It demonstrates that in different countries with contrasting situation vis-a-vis poverty (in terms of scale and seriousness of problems) and anti-poverty policies (in terms of attention paid and funding allocated to rural development) the adoption of alternative approaches to dealing with poverty can alleviate rural social malaise.