Constructing Poverty and Social Exclusion
by Social Politics and Other Experts

Workshop led by:

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Iwona Kudlińska, University of Lodz

Overview:

Poverty and social exclusion can be considered as phenomena constructed both in everyday interactions and in professional and public discourse, yet they can be seen as the examples of social construction of social problems. Such constructs are deeply rooted in the class order and related to the attitudes and the system of values of social actors (e.g., Sennett & Cobb 1993; Giddens 1994; Lister 2004; Sennett 2004). At the same time, social constructs as the cognitive phenomena influence strongly the professional activities, especially the relationships between professionals and clients.

The workshop will begin with short discussion on theoretical assumptions of social construction process, its features and dimensions. We will discuss main social constructs, as well as claims and statements formulated by social actors referring to social exclusion and poverty. We will look at questions about the meaning of social problems and about the way poverty and social exclusion are constructed during practical/professional activities (social problem work made by claims-makers). We would like to invite the participants to reflect on the way the experts (social politics and professional helpers) build descriptions of social exclusion processes and construct “portraits” of the excluded ones on the foundation of different kinds of qualitative data (IDIs, FGIs, press interviews, official statements, professional opinions and assessments, also biographical interviews with experts according to Riemann’s notion on “making one’s own practice strange”). Researchers and practitioners are welcome to active participation in the workshops also to present their data for group work. Due to the schedule, we will be able to work on limited sets of data, therefore persons interested in submitting their materials for the group discussion are kindly asked to send the 1 page description of the material (basic information about the project, information about the method and type of presented data) by 1.06.2017 to Agnieszka Golczyńska-Grondas: agrondas@uni.lodz.pl or Iwona Kudlińska: kudlinska@interia.eu.

Workshop program:

1. Introduction—discourses of social exclusion and poverty, social construction of social problems. Methodological procedures, problems and dilemmas
2. Group work on the qualitative data provided by the workshop teachers and the participants
3. Presenting and disseminating the results of analysis—basic ethical dilemmas
4. Feedback

Outcomes:
Skills of analyzing different type of qualitative data, developed reflection on basic methodological and ethical dilemmas related to the research field.
Agnieszka Golczyńska-Grondas, PhD, Associated Professor at the Institute of Sociology, University of Lodz. Since mid 1990 she has been dealing with the problems of poverty, social exclusion in Lodz and Lodz voievodship. Her research activities, based on qualitative methodology (especially biographical method), are oriented at the analysis of social marginalization in micro and mezzo-structural dimensions (intergenerational transmission of poverty in neighborhoods of relegation, identity, social roles, the issue of significant others). She has been also analyzing the activities of helping institutions and NGOs targeted at marginalized collectivities at the local government level, the conditioning of helping institutions’ activities and the relationships between professional helpers and their clients. The ethical issues of social studies and the development of the discussion about social sciences methodology in the research on poverty and social exclusion are very important part of Agnieszka Golczyńska-Grondas' works. She has been constantly cooperating with the practitioners promoting the idea of long-term, evidence-based, interdisciplinary, systemic professional activities. Her PhD dissertation was awarded by The Institute of Labour and Social Studies in Poland under the patronage of the Ministry of Economy, Labour and Social Policy in 2003. She was one of the leaders in international team working on the implementation of biographical method into vocational counseling and social work practice within the framework of INVITE project (Leonardo da Vinci Program) (“European Studies on Inequalities and Social Cohesion” volumes 1-2/2008, 3-4/2008). She published three books: Mężczyźni z enklaw biedy. Rekonstrukcja pełnionych ról społecznych, Men from the Enclaves of Poverty. The Reconstruction of Fulfilled Social Roles (2004); Wychowało nas państwo”. Rzecz o tożsamości dorosłych wychowanków placówek opiekuńczo-wychowawczych, “We Were Brought Up by The State.” About the Identity of the Adult Leavers of Child Residential Care Institutions, 2014 and “Chybotliwa Łódź. Losy wychowanków placówek opiekuńczo-wychowawczych – analiza socjologiczna, Shaky Boat. Life Stories of the Leavers of Child Care Residential Institutions—the Sociological Analysis, 2016.

Iwona Kudlińska (MA in sociology) is a sociologist at the University of Lodz. Main fields of interest include: social problems (poverty and social exclusion, child neglect), family affairs and social policy. Her master’s thesis: “Social Exclusion and Stigma of Poor Women in Biographical Perspective” was awarded in competition organized under the auspices of Polish Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in the fields of labor problems and social policy. She participated in several conferences and research projects in the fields of family and social problems. Now she is a project manager of research grant for pre-doctoral researchers awarded by the Polish National Science Centre (Project “Helplessness within childcare and parental affairs—social constructing and management of the problem”) and manager of research project “Between exclusion and inclusion—Povertyism as the barrier for professional social work with selected clients of the welfare—families with the young having specific parental needs,” University of Lodz, own research—project for young scientists. She conducts her research from the perspective of social constructionism in sociology of social problems. She published one book (as co-author with Andrzej Kacprzak): “Social work with ex-prisoners and their families,” 2014 and several articles, for example: Social stigma in poverty discourse and its role in social exclusion process [in:] Culture and Society 1/2012, Povertyism as the barrier for professional social work [in:] E. Kantowicz, A. Leszczyńska-Rejchert (red.), Stereotypes in social work and reintegration, Wydawnictwo Akapit, Toruń, Feminization of poverty in contemporary qualitative research and analysis [in] Slany K., Struzik J., Wojnicka K., ed., Gender in Polish society, Nomos, Crocow.