



Community based approaches from perspectives of church and welfare state

Kari Ruotsalainen & Ari Nieminen

“Welfare state” = states assume also social political functions in addition to taking care of internal and external order and security.

According to Gösta Esping-Andersen (The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism, 1990, 26-29) so called Western nation-states have three basic models of welfare state:

1. Liberal welfare state
2. Conservative or corporatistic welfare state
3. Social democratic / universal welfare state

“Communities” = individuals and groups that are integrated through shared collective identity, activity or a symbol.

Small-scale communities play a minor role in the Finnish welfare state that is directed to give more or less equal services to individuals and families.

Ultimately and in most of the cases “community” refers in Finnish context to the nation-state or nation (national community).

However, also in Finland four levels of services and customers / service users can be identified:

1. private services in markets,
2. services and benefits based on positions in labour markets,
3. public general services,
4. diaconia, third sector and voluntary services mostly for the most unprivileged of which some are excluded even from the services of the welfare state.

Finnish diaconia is done by parishes

Only 5 diaconal institutions in Finland

Before 1972 parish diaconesses was considered as home visiting nurses

Since 1972 there has been no official status in for diaconia in the state's social and healthcare services

Diaconia was "forgotten" from the new legislation

Economical depression 1990-1995 put serious stress to the welfare system

Diaconia reacted fast: economical counseling, social and material support, advocating situation of unemployed, bankruptcies by entrepreneurs and people heavily in dept (4th level of services)

Social diaconia and church's role in diaconia was again acknowledged by the state by co-operation

Tougher values in the society: market economy as a guide of political decisions

Church and third sector is seen as resource of softening consequences of hard economy guided decisions

Communities in the diaconia are easily seen same as special groups in need: mentally handicapped, families, elderly etc.

Towards liberal model in Finland?

How far can diaconia go with the taking place of official welfare system?

How far it can go in the softening consequences without pointing reasons?

“Taking place” should turn to prophetic diaconia: Advocating change in the situation of depressed and depriving structures of the society

New recognition of communities as social and political actors, recognizing people as subjects of diaconia