

SOCIAL POLICY, SOCIAL INTERACTION AND “WELFARE DIAMONDS” IN SIX COUNTRIES: IMPLICATION FOR SOCIAL WORK

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Cross-national comparative social policy research can contribute to a wider and deeper understanding of the similarities and differences social work has throughout the world. Family, market, State, community (in alphabetical order) can be considered the most important actors in influencing the personal welfare and providing support and help in handling with problems everybody meets in his/her life . The so-called “welfare diamond” (Evil, Pijl, and Ungerson, 1994) formed by the mutual interactions between these four actors provides an effective and simple model for comparing countries located in different continents and immersed in different cultures. At the same time it provides a good frame for further investigation on how and where social work focus its action to promote social justice and well-being. The aim of this presentation is to compare the general structure of social policy and social interaction in six countries (three EU members - Finland, Italy, UK - and three others - India, Russia, South Africa- outside EU) and demonstrate that the “welfare diamond” is a useful conceptual tool also in comparative social work research because it is focused on subjects considered important in any social work intervention. Standing up to complexity and linking social work and political action are themes connected with this issue. The main points are: 1) a description of the interactions between the variables (family, market, State, community); 2) an analysis of the quantitative indicators and narrative analysis to make invisible “welfare diamonds” visible; 3) a comparative analysis between the countries (Finland, India, Italy, Russia, South Africa, UK) involved in the research with regards to the variables and 4) the implication for social work. The research leading to these results has received funding from the People Programme (Marie Curie Actions) of the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme FP7/2007-2013/ under REA grant agreement n° 295203.