

Market versus Society: The Social Policy Dilemmas

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Abstract

This paper is elaborating on the imbalances of the controversial interrelationship between social policy and the market. This exploration is investigating principles such as freedom, liberty or justice in the context of the huge impact of markets in social welfare. In theory, social policy is expected to ‘humanize’ the socially unjust market distribution of wealth. In practice, social policy has failed to diminish market inequalities. In fact, social policy rarely intended to challenge seriously the profound inequalities delivered by the greedy capitalist market.

Social policy embodies an ethos of collectivism and a commitment to social justice which should balance liberty and justice. The market on the other hand, should operate within a proper framework of common values and constrains. The nature of social policy reflects the prevailing conceptual approach to freedom or justice and derives from the counteraction between society and market. Individuals are not only producers or consumers but also citizens. The interpretation of social policies appreciates the extent to which welfare intervention achieves to reconcile human societies with inhuman markets, to harmonize social with economic aims. In sum, social policy is confronted by dilemmas necessitating choices between diverse socioeconomic alternatives and is struggling to adjust market outcomes to society’s needs.
